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ABSTRACT

Early efforts at site-based decision making in Texas created many diverse questions about how to proceed. In some school districts, the change to a new decision-making balance centered around the district office. In others, strong campus control was established and effective self-governance plans were created. This monograph presents the experiences of different schools involved in site-based decision making. There are 10 chapters by separate authors: (1) "School District Policies Supporting School Renewal," Carl D. Glickman; (2) "Site-Based-Decision-Making: Hot Air or Serious Business," Grant Simpson; (3) "Site-Based Decisions and At-Risk Programs: We Did It Our Way!," Karen Buser; (4) "Grassroots Perceptions of District Office Roles and School Reform," Phillip Payne and Edward Pajak; (5) "Site-Based Decision-Making: Deregulation, School Style," Judy Reinhartz; (6) "Site-Based Decision-Making: The Role of the Central Office Administrators in Decentralization," Gloria McCown; (7) "Superintendents and Site-Based Decision-Making: The Test of Practical Leadership," Mike Boone; (8) "Site-Based Decision-Making and Strategic Planning: Friends or Foes?," James R. LeBuffe; (9) "Curriculum Integrity in an Environment of Decentralized Decision-Making," Claude H. Cunningham; and (10) "A Culture for the Development of Accomplished Rule-Breakers," W. L. Sanders. (Contains 73 references.) (JPT)

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INTEGRATION OR FRAGMENTATION: THE IMPACT OF SITE-BASED DECISION-MAKING

Texas Association for
Supervision and Curriculum Development

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INTEGRATION OR FRAGMENTATION: THE IMPACT OF SITE-BASED DECISION-MAKING

Edited by
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1993 Yearbook of the Texas Association for
Supervision and Curriculum Development

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FOREWORD

DR. CHARLES REAVIS

Who should exercise decision-making authority and at what level in the organization should it be exercised? There are those who would argue that by tradition and logic it should reside at the central office level. They would cite the practice of selecting the best people from the schools for positions in the central office, the potential for coordination at that level, and tradition among other reasons. Others would scoff and point to the onerous bureaucracy that inevitably follows, the emphasis on monitoring for compliance, the deadening standardization, the distance from the problems, the resulting decisions that may actually inhibit solutions, and so forth.

Others would argue that decision-making authority must rest with those closest to the problem. Only they have the personal knowledge of (1) the problem that is required in order to creatively respond and (2) the resources available in the school. They would point to the energy and creativity that is generated when the power to act is granted. Naysayers might point out that in more than a few schools, the teachers practically beat the students out of the door in the afternoon, teachers are generally recruited from the bottom ranks of college students, they generally seek only advantages for themselves (more salary, smaller classes), and such an arrangement is an invitation to chaos.

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Still others would give decision-making authority to the "consumers", as in the parents. They would have the ultimate authority by choosing where their child (and the resulting money) would go. Schools and districts would be compelled to adopt the practices that would attract the most customers.

This issue is far from settled. Compelling arguments and examples can be cited by both sides. My own guess is that the polarization that we are witnessing marks the early stages of change. Some districts and schools will be more comfortable with a gradual transition in decision-making authority. Others will be bolder and may extend more decision authority to the school level than the school can handle. Over time excess tends to become apparent, and either some control is reasserted or timid first steps are accelerated by events or pressure. There is probably no universal "best balance". We may even arrive at the time when districts will be able to flex with the amount of decision-making authority, depending on the school. Yet another option may be that schools are given the opportunity to make a case for the amount of authority they should be granted. At any rate, this is a yeasty time for education; and we can look forward to more, not less, experimentation in the quest for ever-improved schools.

INTRODUCTION

DR. LINDA AVILA
EDITOR

When we began conceptualizing this monograph, site-based decision-making was just being introduced in districts across Texas. After some concrete experience with this concept, school personnel are finding questions that were not anticipated and answers that were not imagined. Like a hurricane that is beginning to form, there were disorganized thoughts and attitudes swirling in schools and districts as educators began to redefine the systems and subsystems in the light of site-based decision-making. These forces have organized themselves through time and evidenced distinct patterns. In some districts, the spiral formations are very tight and centered around the schoo' district office. In others, the hurricane has spawned tornadoes and other phenomena, which show themselves as strong campuses with positive and effective plans for self-governance. This monograph shares some of the experiences; it is organized to depict a balance of forces and to portray how that balance varies from context to context based on local circumstances. The chapters move from very school-centered approaches to systemic reform to more district-controlled situations. None of these states of equilibrium is the answer, and none can be exported to other contexts effectively without adaptation. Just as no two hurricanes are alike in their effects, so too has site-based decision-making

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spawned different forms in different arenas. The potential for renewal after the storm serves as a central theme to this monograph, as educators examine the structures within which they find themselves and seek to mold those structures to ultimately result in the highest quality student learning possible.

Rather than summarize sections or chapters of this monograph, as is often the custom in introductions, we have extracted important quotes from each of the chapters which are shared here in the hope that these thoughts will cause you to read the rest of the chapters to contemplate the thoughts presented to you:

"There can be no long-term rethinking of schools if there is not a long-term rethinking of the policies and support structures provided to schools."

Carl Glickman

"In whatever setting, there will be those who are obsessed with the barriers to achievement and those who can see, feel, and anticipate the taste of success. The question is yours."

Grant Simpson

"The future holds challenging potential for schools exercising site-based decision-making. The freedom to modify curricula, alter methods of instructional delivery, develop community resources, design budgets around specific campus needs, and build technological support are all pieces of a successful school's puzzle."

Karen Buser

"A small but growing body of literature cautions that decentralization is no panacea and that some degree of coordination is necessary to balance local interests with common goals."

Phillip Payne and Edward Pajak

"The idea of making changes or having to restructure the curriculum, the schedule, the way decisions are made and other changes often evoke strong feelings of confusion, disorientation, and even anger. Working through the confusion and conflicts is crucial in becoming skillful at working through the site-based decision-making process."

Judy Reinhartz

"Critical to the success of any restructuring movement such as the development of a shared governance system is a clear model and vision."

Gloria McCown

"Successful reform requires the active and personal engagement of the superintendent of schools."

Mike Boone

"Strategic planning goals, if produced with wide buy-in by teachers, administrators, the community, and school board members, assume a stature and strength that can provide impetus for positive change."

James R. LeBuffe

"The very essence of site-based decision-making is to move the locus of each decision to the organizational level closest to that accountable for the decision."

Claude H. Cunningham

"Without meaningful, deep change initiated by change-agents and risk-takers, educational change will be left to powerful citizens such as Ross Perot..."

W. L. Sanders

May this monograph create a hurricane in your mind!

1

School District Policies Supporting School Renewal

CARL GLICKMAN

A quantum shift in the organization, design, and responsibilities of school districts will be needed to institutionalize school renewal as an incessant activity for all schools in a state and a nation. There can be no long-term rethinking of schools if there is not a long-term rethinking of the policies and support structures provided to schools. The central issues between schools and districts are those of control. Who is in charge of what? Who initiates what? Who is responsible for what? Who supports whom? In answering these questions, a delicate balance is needed for districts to be able to support schools who have developed a democratic community ready to move ahead and to provide control and structure to those schools not yet ready for collective autonomy. Also, districts should not separate the two groups of schools into rival camps.

The need for clear policies that strike a balance between autonomy and control at the district level is a great challenge, one that many school

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boards, teacher unions and associations, and superintendents/district personnel have just begun to understand. From a school board and district perspective, it is fairly easy to determine what is wrong and needs to be corrected with the local schools; it is more difficult to see what is wrong with the district and board that needs to be corrected. Analysis of oneself is the necessary precondition before casting stones at others. This analysis needs to be carefully thought through or the entire school-based reform movement (in current lingo "site-based management") will be added to the long list of innovations that have come and gone. The lack of such thought and sensitivity to the complexities, differences, and histories of school reform has been seen, time and time again, in the same treatment by superintendents, school boards, districts, and unions of their local schools. This time the new education solution is to *mandate that all schools become site-based. decentralized and collaborative by a particular date*. Furthermore, these new regulations, with the same old top down strategy, go on to define for all schools the same governance process, composition, and role. One shoe, even though the shoe is new, is still to fit all!

The reader might work in such a school district that has mandated or is thinking about such policies. The new shoe has swept the country in the early 1990s. If one studied carefully how successful democratic communities are formed, one would realize that to mandate decentralization is absurd. It is another case of simplistic, bandwagon application to the human, fragile, and moral enterprise of schools. Pause for a moment and think about mandating that a school be site-based and decentralized, without seeing first if the local school members are ready or willing to take greater control over themselves. Imagine how implausible it is to require all schools be collaborative and then defining their governance for them, without involving the school itself in determining its own form, process, and principles of governance. Most of the site-based policies by states and districts are simply another series of requirements being pushed down the throats of local school people telling them by dictatorial decree that they will be democratic! Whether you want it, like it, or are ready for it, you are going to do it!

Sorry, but democracies and moral enterprises do not work that way. Enduring democracies are not created by uniform mandates. Such policies are simply "old wine in new skin" and will be tasted and not swallowed—simply regurgitated in the same manner as the past. Instead, history informs us that democracies that stand the test of time and remain consistent to their core function are created from within.[1] Covenants are developed, charters are instituted, and a built-in process of critical study and reflection are implemented by the local people themselves.

Democracies that succeed are created of the people, by the people, and for the people.

What Does a School Board and District Want of Its Schools?

I would suggest that the only legitimate role of school boards and districts is to assure that "students are being educated to become productive citizens of the larger society." The school board's role is one of setting broad policies and providing resources that support schools' being able to accomplish that goal. The district's role is to be the coordination and implementation arm of active assistance to schools. **Let me be clear, at the risk of sounding incredibly naive. The role of school boards is not to be involved in the internal educational operations of schools, and the role of districts is not to determine for students, teachers, principals, and parents the educational programs of a school.** The job of both board and district is to define the district core beliefs about teaching and learning, define the goals and objectives (outcomes) of an educated student, and then provide the money, technical services, and human consultation to allow the schools to figure out how to get the job done. The times they should intervene into the programs and operations of a school are 1) when they are asked to by the school or 2) when a school is not prepared to make decisions for itself. American school boards and districts are, with a few notable exceptions, ineffectual dinosaurs of a prehistoric age hopelessly out of tune with the needs of schools to be able to make quick responses to an ever-changing informational age. The board and district notions of standardizing the work of schools is derived from the 19th Century mentality of dominance and power, while what is needed in the 21st century is a mentality of response and assistance within principled parameters.

For the first time in American education, there is a serious national movement that questions the very existence of districts and school boards. Other countries (New Zealand, England) have either eliminated school boards and districts completely or allowed individual schools to simply opt to leave their districts. Similar pilots of schools operating outside their districts and school boards are happening in North America. It will be a sad day in American democracy when school boards and the notion of publicly elected officials looking after the common good of education are deemed irrelevant. Furthermore, it will be a loss of potential assistance if school districts that *could* serve a vital role to assist schools in their internal work are discarded. But the impatience throughout North America grows; and if school boards and districts do not learn new proactive roles and develop clear policies, they should be dismantled.

Why Get in the Way?

If a district were to say to its schools that they will give them *total* latitude of operations and funds if they operate within these following givens, what would be lost and what would be gained?

Givens for School-Based Autonomy
-Constitutional law
-Equity for all students
-Multi-cultural sensitivity
-Attention to research
-Progress towards district goals
-Public disclosure of student results
-Foundation of a school covenant, charter, and critical study process.

What these givens suggest is that a school board and district should want to give their schools autonomy if the school has a foundation for making decisions, if those decisions sit within responsible and legal parameters, and if the student results are consistent with district priorities and are made public. Let us elaborate on the givens.

A. Constitutional law means that whatever a school chooses to do is not in violation of state or federal law.

B. Equity for all students means that education decisions must take into account the education of all students, not favor one group of students at the expense of others, and narrow existing gaps in achievements among students of different gender, racial/ethnic groups and socio-economic levels.

C. Multi-cultural sensitivity means that school decisions need to respond to differences in societal groups and incorporate issues of race, ethnicity, culture, and gender as part of the ongoing teaching and learning process in the school.

D. Attention to research is defined as decisions made from a basis of knowing the empirical and case study evidence to support a particular decision and evidence of a process to monitor the results of the decision.

E. Achievement or progress toward district goals and objectives means that a school's decisions need to address, in its own way, those educational priorities that exist across all schools in a district and have school board approval.

F. Public disclosure of student results refers to the school's responsibility to make known through public meetings, printed reports, and district/school board briefings the attainment or progress toward the identified objectives and priorities.

G. Foundation of a school covenant, charter, and critical study process

refers to the school plan having been derived from democratic governance, the school's principles of teaching and learning, and a systematic way of information infusion, study, and action research.

A district might wish to enlarge, expand, further clarify, or reduce the givens or it might wish to start from scratch and come up with its own givens. The reader might be merrily following along thinking "No big deal; this sounds fine as district policy. We could do this." Now here comes the jolt to school districts and boards!

If a board/district is rightfully focused on parameters, processes, and results and individual schools accept the givens and develop their plans, *the details and programs are up to the school*. This concept means that a school could use different teaching materials, organize students differently, use school time differently, spend money differently, and staff differently from other schools in the same district. Assessment procedures of student learning could vary, grades and report cards could be unique and released at different times, and the curriculum could vary from school to school. One high school could have eight periods with an open campus, another could have four periods with a closed campus, or one school could teach by traditional disciplines and another by spiral themes. One school could develop and use its planning time, staff development monies, and teacher evaluation procedures differently from others. Another school could follow a textbook series; others would not have to. One school could use its financial allotment by reducing its administrative staff and giving faculty extended contracts; another school could use its allotment to reduce teaching faculty and increase counseling and social services. Schools would be free to enter into their own agreements with grant agencies, community services, and business. Groups of schools could band together to coordinate services among themselves. The district role for such unshackling of schools would be to bring information and potential services to the schools, to uncover common needs, and to coordinate and link resources to schools that have emerged from the individual schools' own assessments and plans. Now the reader might be thinking, "This is going too far; it is starting to sound like anarchy to me."

Not so. Remember, we are *only* dealing with those schools which have a readiness for such work, have prepared their own school community for doing such work, and desire to become more democratic and participative. These are schools with a purpose. We are *not* talking about schools in a district who have neither inclination nor readiness. They obviously will need more central structures, controls, and preparation before undertaking transitions to total democratic, site-based school renewal.

But What About Me? The Issue of Accountability—The School Board and District

Before proceeding to specific policy formation, the concepts of fairness and sameness need to be untangled for superintendents and school board members. The discussion about schools being allowed, within parameters, to have unique curricula, teaching materials, staffing, schedules, and reports disturbs some highly caring people. They have a keen sense of social justice for all students in their district, and they equate justice with equal treatment. Their thinking is expressed in this way: "To show that we do not discriminate or teach any student from any part of town less than any student from other parts of town, we as a school board and district need to assure that all students receive the same programs, the same curriculum, the same textbooks, and the same allocation of time. Therefore, fifth-grade work is fifth-grade work no matter what school a student attends, and a high school course of study is the same course of study no matter what high school a student attends." The idea, well-intentioned and understandable, is that to be fair to students, they need to be treated the same.

Without taking this point to extremes, I would like to suggest the opposite ("to be fair with students, we need to have different treatments") because concern should be with the *fairness of results, not the sameness of treatment*. Look at virtually any school district with more than three or four schools where the same programs are given for all students, and you will find many students falling further and further behind in educational results the longer that they receive the same treatment. A district is in an indefensible position of arguing and controlling uniformity of programs across schools, while sizable portions of students (and faculty) lose their motivation to learn.

It is fairer and more just for a district to focus on the uniformity of broad outcomes—a productive democratic citizen—than it is to demand compliance of same treatment by monitoring and testing for a list of competencies and skills to see that everyone in the district is covering the same objectives in the same sequence—divorced from democratic life.

The legitimate role of a district, superintendent, and school board is to address one's rightful concern for fairness by 1) allowing those willing schools to have the latitude to produce equitable results, 2) keeping structure and consistent programs in place for those schools currently unable or unwilling to initiate, and 3) adjusting resources to account for equity of results.

It is the adjustment of resources where again unequal treatment becomes most fair. Those schools that have the highest percentages of students in poverty in a district should receive the largest allocations of funds. To

allocate the same district funds equally to schools based on student enrollment perpetuates the existing inequities in education. A district should strive to make its "high poverty schools" its most attractive ones—by having additional resources, nicer facilities, supplements and incentives for faculty and staff, and more staff development opportunities. In this way, a district does not neglect its "higher income schools" but acknowledges that the challenges a high income school community faces is simply not to the same degree as schools located in poverty areas. This distribution of resources may be politically unpopular as vocal parents, community members, and school board members disproportionately come from the wealthier part of town or see themselves representing the higher income, highly educated segment of a community and want equal or even more funds to flow to their schools and their children. But a district and board concerned about justice and fairness need to think of unequal distribution of funds as a way to correct glaring inequities of educational progress.

In the same manner, a district should set aside some funds, as "venture capital" to be used as seed money to help those schools wishing to take the step to operate as autonomous, responsible communities. The venture capital could be a small percentage of the district budget or a semi-independent budget of outside funds raised from donations, grants, and corporate/business sponsorships. The venture capital should be large enough so that a school could use it to pay for some extra planning days, retreats, off-site facilities, or staff development opportunities to help give additional planning for school change. It is difficult to project an exact dollar amount, but venture capital of as little as $500 to $1,000 to a school can be helpful in their beginning year—a more adequate fund for large schools would be up to $10,000. Venture capital should be targeted only to schools that have indicated a willingness to accept the conditions for autonomy (the givens) and the capital is provided on an "as needed" basis—with the schools in poverty areas having greatest priority. This venture capital ideally should be provided for the first few years of implementation with the school eventually operating on their typically allotted funds, thus freeing the venture capital for other schools.

There are no hard and fast rules about the amount or duration of venture capital. Districts that simply do not have money for such an enterprise and have no way to raise it can still proceed with an invitation for their schools to regulate themselves under certain parameters with the district committing certain services back to the school. Venture capital is most importantly a symbol of support (even as inadequate as it might be). The district is acknowledging the extra time and work involved for a school to become a community, thus providing a token of support to be used by the school for

its planning.

As important, venture capital should never be used to exclude or limit the number of schools who want to participate in school renewal. It is better to provide no money, thus allowing any and all schools to participate if they are willing, than to provide money for only a few schools and thus eliminate others from participating. A district needs invitational and accessible policies of decentralized school renewal available to all schools and needs to avoid the creation of a pilot of a certain number of schools that divides the district into the "elite schools" and "the have-nots." This avoidance is tricky to accomplish when money is attached to participation. The district would need to decide that either 1) every school that initiates a proposal could receive some additional funds, 2) no school would receive funds, or 3) only schools that meet more specific criteria (i.e., high percentages of poverty students) would receive funds.

Identifying Readiness of Schools in a District

From a district perspective, Table 1 might clarify the levels of readiness of schools to be purposeful, democratic communities. The table includes estimates of the percentages of schools at various levels in a typical large school district.

TABLE I
SCHOOL RENEWAL
Levels of Readiness

Levels	I	II	III	IV	V
Knowledge:	Don't Know	Don't Know	Know	Know	Know
Commitment:	Don't Care	Care	Care	Care	Care
History of Collaboration	None	None	None	Some	Total
Readiness	Not Ready	Not Ready	Not Ready	Ready for Entry	Full Implementation
Estimate %:	5 to 15%	30%	30%	15 to 20%	5 to 15%
Needed Structure	District Structure	District Structure	District Structure	Self-Governance	Self-Governance

Level I is a school where, as a body, there is little knowledge about how they might improve school-wide education and there is little commitment or care to find out what could be done. Level II is a school where there exists little knowledge about school renewal as the school has been highly isolated and routinized in the past, but there is an interest among many members to find out what could be done. Level III school members are knowledgeable about school-wide change and have a large group committed to change. School-wide collaboration has just begun and they need time to get their charter, covenant, and critical study process in order. Level IV schools possess the knowledge and commitment, have developed a democratic process for decision making, have identified principles of learning, and have set learning targets. They are ready for implementation. Level V schools already are self-governing with a track record of accomplishments and are now pursuing bolder changes.

Such level classification is artificial in that schools can slip and slide, back track, and leap forward. For the sense of trying to clarify school district policy, let us accept that schools are at such different levels of preparation and that Level V full implementation is what the district eventually would want every school to achieve. So how does a district help every school, regardless of level of readiness, move ahead? Furthermore, how can this be done, respecting that democracy must grow from the inside out, that the same treatment for all schools is inherently unfair, and that mandates are failure prone?

A District Plan for Encouraging School Initiative

A district plan should 1) acknowledge different levels of school readiness, 2) create an invitation to test a school's determination for autonomy, 3) provide special linking services to willing and/or ready schools, 4) continue existing district regulation for schools "not yet ready", 5) keep access open for all schools to learn from each other, and 6) increase the autonomy of each school until all schools are special places with uniquely crafted programs focused on democracy and learning.

1. *Acknowledge different levels.* Districts need to make clear to schools that they are not expected to do what they are not ready to do. History, traditions, norms, and routines vary from school to school, and the soundest way of bringing about school renewal is to ask schools to figure out for themselves whether they are willing and ready to proceed with self-governance around school-wide educational changes. If they are not, it is no flaw in their character—simply an acknowledgement that they will need centralized district structures to guide their current work and will need further orientation for all roles in the schools as to what they might do to

become more autonomous.

2. *Send a district invitation to schools for self-governance.* There is no better way to find out what schools are ready to do than to ask them by sending an invitation that makes understandable: a) the criteria for self-governance (what needs to be in place in the school); b) the district givens (the parameters of the school's work); c) the areas that the district will decentralize to the school (funding, evaluation, curriculum, scheduling); d) particular resources and assistance the district will commit to the school; e) evaluation—how the school will hold itself accountable for student results; and f) the necessary sign-offs that assure the school has the commitment of the principal and a high percentage of faculty and staff and the involvement of parents/community and students. The full commitment of the principal is a must, and a high percentage of faculty/staff commitment is essential. Requiring a secret ballot of faculty/staff is an important way to block potentially undue influence or pressure.[2] In no case should a school receive district approval for school-wide autonomy when the majority of faculty/staff are against it or if the principal opposes it.

Further, **prior student performance measures should not be used as a criterion for acceptance of a school into self-governance.** Unwittingly, some districts and states have ushered in self-renewal programs and selected only schools that have high student performance indicators. Besides the problem with the indicators themselves, the test of mettle of a school should be whether they are *willing to engage in the struggle itself* to figure out better ways to educate students. It can be reasonably argued that schools with lower student performance indicators need greater access to such decentralized efforts than those schools who are doing relatively well in the public and district's eyes.

3. *Provide special linking services to schools that have accepted the invitation.* Venture capital can help schools with some of their own planning, and the district should provide a coordinator(s) for the school renewal effort. Teams of approximately 4-9 people from each school (composed of principal, a majority of faculty, parents/community members, possibly students, and a district contact person) should be brought together periodically—at least once over ten weeks—to review their processes with each other, meet with schools or consultants outside their districts to discuss similar changes, and spend time in internal discussions and further planning about their own schools. In addition, the district should provide a central office person to be the school's contact person to call for assistance with needs assessments, information gathering, and participation in school meetings. Furthermore, the district should provide ways of formally linking the schools with each other by newsletters, electronic mail, visits to each

other, and identification of school people with expertise who can serve as consultants for others in workshops, on-site visits, curriculum work, and staff development.

4. *Continue existing regulations for other schools.* A district should not "throw the baby out with the bath water" for good reasons. The district over time has established policies and regulations that ensure at least minimal levels of competent instruction. Teacher evaluation programs, curriculum work, reporting procedures, staff development programs, hiring practices and other district standards for school performance should not be discarded but instead serve as a *template* for all schools until they have developed a willingness, a process and a plan for moving beyond those structures. Therefore, all the normal district standards and regulations remain in force for those schools not yet ready to accept the invitation. *This is not a punitive matter*, but rather a developmental matter that respects the temporary need of some schools for protective external structure.

5. *Keep access open for all schools.* To avoid the exclusionary and elitist fragmentation that occurs among schools in districts where "pilot" programs give some schools special status and recognition not given to the others, school district policy should reflect that "self-governing schools" status is open to all schools. All schools have the same opportunity to apply and to be approved. There are no limits on the number of schools that can participate. And a non-participating school can apply to opt in at periodic and ongoing times. The door is never shut.

With such a plan the district has a responsibility to keep *all* schools in the district informed of each other's work. Some ways to keep information flowing are to 1) invite members from non-participating schools to attend the district meetings of participating schools; 2) encourage visitations among participating and non-participating schools; 3) disseminate newsletters, progress reports, and other materials from participating schools to non-participating schools; and 4) solicit and acknowledge the good, instructional work going on in non-participating schools at public district occasions. The last point is worth noting. A district does not want to set up the instructional program of the participating self-renewal schools as the model that receives all of the recognition. Other schools can come to view those schools and the district program with resentment and as a sign that the district regards their own school as inferior. A way to avoid or minimize this type of resentment is to showcase exciting and valuable practices that are occurring among schools, regardless of whether or not the schools are part of the self-renewal program. Realistically, there are some exceptional programs that involve students in meaningful and highly challenging work in non-self-renewal schools that might very well be equal or superior to

those in self-renewal schools. Therefore, the acknowledgment and sharing of such practices are important in their own right.

6. *Increase the autonomy of each school until all schools are special.* As a district learns of the success and failures from the efforts of self-renewing schools operating outside of previous regulations and procedures, it should use such information to assess and modify current regulations for all schools. For example, if one school finds a novel and particularly effective way to deliver curriculum, that information should now be used when the current standard district curriculum comes up for review.

All in all, the district needs to be clear that its policies are meant to unleash the creativity and particular talents of each school community. The district is concerned with the results of students' becoming productive citizens in a democratic society. The results are the driving and ultimate concern. Some districts will be more conservative and have many turf battles. To avoid denying schools any previously centralized operation, both school and districts will need to learn what to give up in order to gain for students. The bargain is that autonomy is within parameters, and parameters will be pushed further back as schools show their power. The end is to have all schools exercising their own professional and moral judgments as a school community concerning how best to educate children. No educational idea that has been carefully studied, fits the givens, and has the support of the local school community should be suppressed. Instead, it should be encouraged, supported, and assisted by the district.

Does the District and Board Eventually Fade Away?

Paradoxically, as schools take over greater responsibility for themselves, the role of school boards, and more pointedly the work of the central offices, increases. The district must reorganize itself, give more resources back to schools, and provide the coordination among schools that will not occur by chance. There will be fewer bureaucratic functions in the central office in terms of chains of command and decisions made for schools; there might be fewer personnel. But the personnel who remain have a three-fold job: keeping local school work focused on education; coordinating information across schools; and helping schools to do the work that each school cannot do by itself. In the vernacular, it is easier to sit in a central office and make decisions about what schools should do than to sit with schools and figure out how to help coordinate and implement their work.

Issues to Resolve in Building District Policies

In working with various school districts throughout the United States, Canada, and Western Europe, I have found the following issues important

to resolve. Their resolutions provide a sense of overall purpose for individual schools in relation to the entire district. The resolutions allow for everyone to know their responsibilities and the appropriate times for the district to intervene in an individual school's affairs.

The following questions should be tackled, in the preliminary analysis, by the key representatives of the district: the superintendent, school board members, central office personnel, building level principals, and teachers and, when appropriate, expanded to include other parent, community, civic, business, and student groups.

Issue #1 - Who is the district? What does it stand for? How are district decisions made that directly affect teaching and learning? How are district decisions studied to determine their effectiveness of student learning?

These questions deal with the substance of the district's covenant (principles of teaching and learning), charter (constitution for making democratic, inclusive decisions), and critical analysis (information infusion and action research). The first question is the most important one as it influences all the rest: Who is the district? When it is said that "this is a district decision," what does that mean? Is it referring to a decision made by the superintendent alone, by the superintendent with the school board, by an administrative cabinet of associate/assistant superintendents or directors, or by a leadership council composed of central office and building principals? Or is it referring to a defined process and body that represents fully all who are to be affected by the decision?

Issue #2 - What do schools clearly have control over? What areas of decision making simply belong to individual schools? In which decision arenas do schools not need to check with the district or ask permission? In which arenas can schools simply make the decisions for themselves and keep the district informed about what has been done? How well is it understood what areas of decisions simply belong to individual schools (parent programs, scheduling, curriculum, report cards, budgeting and staffing, hiring of personnel, staff development and so on)?

Issue #3 - What does the school district clearly have control over? This is the flip side of Issue #2. In its inverse, what are the areas individual schools cannot make decisions about (such as transportation, student transfer rules, school calendar, maintenance/custodial care, food services, allocation of financial resources to schools, etc.)?

Issue #4 - What are the gray areas? These are the areas that are knowingly unclear that the district retains control over until a school actively pursues an invitation to take greater control. For example, does the district currently make decisions in curriculum, testing, staff development, teacher evaluation, personnel hiring, graduation requirements, and categorical

budget allocations that usually remain at the district level unless a school submits a plan? How would the district initiate an invitation to schools to submit a plan to receive waivers? Under what parameters (givens) and in what ways would the district need to monitor to see that the school carries through with its plan?

Issue #5 - What commitment does the district have to schools that wish to take greater control of themselves? How should the district be organized? What people and services (technical and logistical) will the district provide? Site-based, decentralization efforts in a school district are not simply matters of saying to schools, "You want greater control? Take it." Rather they are reciprocal responses by the district to provide targeted assistance to help such schools be successful.

Issue #6 - What responsibility does a district have to schools which are not ready to move beyond existing centralized district regulations? What requirements need to be kept in place (or developed) with schools which are not initiators? The district needs to be able to define the standards and structures for schools that presently do not have a broad-based, democratic will for self-governance. Therefore, what are the basic programs (curriculum, teaching materials, staff development, teacher evaluation, testing and reporting procedures) required for those schools needing structure, guidance and mentoring?

Biting the Bullet with Decentralized Policies

District policies that focus on the primary purpose of public schools "to educate students for productive citizenship in a democracy" need to be focused on student learning and to facilitate democratic efforts of schools to move forward. Policy, at best, gives aid to a local school community's own efforts to do moral work on behalf of students. Policy, at its worst, obstructs and forces a local school community to comply with work which they regard as immoral. So often, in externally controlled and regulated schools, principals and teachers say, "We know that what we are doing is not in the best interest of our students; it is not how students learn best, but it is what our district (or school board or state) requires." What a terrible way to live a professional life! The moral dimension to live one's life in obligation to principles should be the core of the work of local schools. Educators, students, parents, and other concerned citizens should be deciding what is right, not how to comply with what is wrong.

When a district consciously promotes the moral work of schools by decentralizing upon request to the individual school areas of decision making previously centralized, the transition can create confusion and frustration. *When a school chooses to take greater control, it also chooses to accept*

greater responsibility for its actions; and the district should not intervene when a school makes a controversial decision. This lesson is one of the toughest for schools and districts to learn when moving from dependence to independence.

The following is a story of a school in a district that has developed clear policies that allow schools to know what they control and how to gain greater control via responding to a district invitation. This particular school asked for and received site-based autonomy over areas including staff hiring, teaching materials, internal scheduling arrangements, and all matters of curriculum. The school members, after having established their covenant, charter, and critical study process, had determined a need for students to become more "active constructors of knowledge." Furthermore, they did not see the current curriculum involving all the modalities of learning for active construction of knowledge. The school put together a curriculum task force of teachers, staff, administrators, parents, and students to investigate recent advances in curriculum; the task force visited other schools. Finally, the group recommended to the governing body a five-year plan for revitalizing existing curriculum. A specific recommendation approved was to integrate physical education, art, and music with English, mathematics, and science through "webbed" student projects. The first project in year one was to have students develop an outdoor education facility on a corner of the school yard. Teachers coordinated from the various disciplines the student assignments. After six months of well-executed work, the students had planned, designed, budgeted, field-tested, and constructed a breathtaking outdoor space that included an obstacle course, a rope and rock climbing apparatus, a garden, and a greenhouse. Students wrote "how to" manuals, produced a video, sent out their own news releases, held radio and local television interviews, and volunteered to work with the local town in converting other outdoor spaces for town use. They joined with adult civic groups and began to plan similar spaces for the public in abandoned lots and neglected public parks.

All seemed fine. Students were involved, making real applications of their learning, using the disciplines of math, science, English, art, and music, and then.... A home owner called a school board member demanding that the rock and rope climbing structure be removed—in fact she would prefer the whole project be dismantled. The outdoor apparatus had been built in direct view of this home owner. She had petitioned her next door neighbors about "the ugly structures", "the horrendous colors", "the noise", and "the obstruction of the pleasant view of the hill."

The board member listened and directed the home owner to speak to the principal. She did so; and after hearing the principal's explanation, she was

still unsatisfied and rallied her allies. They called other board members and insisted that the "apparatus must come down." The superintendent heard of the discontent from all sides: the board members, the school principal, and the irate owners. At the next board meeting, the home owners in open session brought their formal complaint to the board demanding action.

Notwithstanding that preventive measures might have been taken before this controversy escalated, the scenario is a most instructive one. It portrays the transition between an old impulse to keep schools as is, dependent on the old power structure of centralized authority, and a new response to a clear policy that reinforces a new era of responsible, school-based renewal. The old impulse is that whenever a school issue becomes publicly controversial, the superintendent and/or school board needs to take the matter over, consult with the parties, and decide the issue for them (the apparatus comes down or the apparatus stays or some compromise solution). The new, reasoned approach is to keep the responsibility for the decision where policy stuck it—with the decision makers! Clearly the district had delegated the areas of curriculum and use of physical space to the individual school. Therefore, the decision was rightfully the school's to make, and the repercussion of the decision also rightfully belonged to the school. It was not up to the superintendent or school board to resolve this issue. To do so would clearly violate the school renewal policy and undermine the belief of any future school renewal work—not only for this school but for others as well.

In this case, superintendent and board followed proper procedure. The superintendent reminded the board of their policy, and the board chair told the irate home owners, "This is not our matter to decide; you need to go back to the school, ask this time for an audience with the principal *and* the governing board of the school, restate and explain your grievance, and try to find mutual resolution. If no resolution is forthcoming and you and the school wish an outsider to arbitrate, then, upon request, such a person will be furnished. I appreciate your concern and look forward to hearing the results of your forthcoming discussion. It's now time, I believe, to move on to other board matters."

The issue was resolved at the school level; the school's governing board learned a lesson about the need to gather more feedback prior to school changes that might affect persons outside of the school. Policy and credibility about school-based renewal remained, and the school and district have since made bell-ringing strides in educational renewal.

Not all scenarios will unfold so simply and be resolved so clearly, but the largest dilemma for school districts and boards is whether they really want to give schools responsible control through clear policies *or*, because of ambivalence,they want to leave policies general and ambiguous. The latter

allows for much rhetoric but little substance to school renewal.

Without districts taking the time to develop clear policies, schools are left in a nowhere-land, no different than before, buffeted by the winds of individual influence and personal favors, knowing that their feet can be cut out from under them at any moment of public controversy or that "the boss" will come and bail them out.

In the absence of district policy for school initiatives, superintendents and boards, knowingly or not, are giving themselves total room to respond to pressure groups. The politically expedient thing to do is to make up policy as one goes along, dependent on who is screaming the loudest. The moral thing to do is to develop policy that will promote the core beliefs about teaching and learning that allow for schools to stay the course.

NOTES

1. For an excellent and highly readable essay on democracies developing from the inside out, I would recommend: Barber, B. R. (1992). Jihad vs. McWorld. *The Atlantic, 265*(3), 53-65.

2. In most of my own work with schools, I set a level of at least 80 percent or more of faculty and staff approval by secret ballot to assure real commitment in one's own district. The level could be adjusted according to local dictate. I realize that, in some settings, to achieve a 51 percent approval is close to miraculous.

2

Site-Based Decision-Making: Hot Air or Serious Business

GRANT SIMPSON

Recent Past
A Blast of Hot Air

Not long ago at a meeting of over 80 superintendents the invited speaker on Senate Bill 1 stunned me with his negative portrayal of site-based decision-making. He went out of his way to inflame the fears of collective bargaining and focused on how to keep the lid screwed down tight on a potentially explosive situation. He spoke of administration and teachers as "us vs. them". At length he exhorted the audience with a list of NEVERS. Never deal with anything but curriculum; never give up control of the agenda; never allow new business which has not been screened; never let them discuss policy, personnel, or any issue unrelated to instruction. Never, never, never!

Never being one to hold my tongue I waited politely for an entree, a niche in the armor; I was confident that he was overstating the case to assuage natural fears of "How do we handle yet another mandate?" At the proper moment, I ventured forth with a brief statement about empowerment and how much sense it seemed to make and wondered aloud how teachers on this very controlled committee might experience same (i.e. why should they

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come?). The superintendent/speaker replied, "Well, they get to have input on next year's goals for TEA." Be still my heart! Another brave participant spoke of a neighboring urban district where 2 campuses made the decision to pilot a year round program. The speaker expressed disbelief at this dumb move and doubt that the district could support individual campuses doing their own thing. Undaunted and not wanting to believe this unilateral stance, I restated the make-up of his district's committee (one teacher representative from its six campuses) and proposed the following scenario:

Suppose the 4 elementary campuses asked to have the reading program put on the agenda. That would be OK? (affirmative response) Good! Now what if two campuses wanted to do more whole language, one wanted to focus on a literature-based approach, and the fourth wished to stay the course with the current basal....WHAT THEN?

Given the ample foreshadowing, I should not have been surprised by: Isn't that the dumbest thing you ever heard? Can you imagine having 3 different reading programs in one district? But somehow I was both surprised and dismayed. Desperately I wanted to reply: Of course I can. During the last five years, I have felt like a cheerleader for teacher empowerment firing up the home teams, promising them meaningful involvement in the decisions related to their work. But expedience ruled the day. Other moments would come. And they did!

Current Needs

The Essential Elements of Serious Business

Concurrently I have been involved with districts across the state in the formation of district plans for site-based decision-making and the training of faculties or identified committees. These experiences have confirmed the following assumptions:

1. *The Need to Reduce Teacher Isolation/Passivity*—Since HB 72, I have conducted more than a 1000 second appraisals using the TTAS (Texas Teacher Appraisal System), conducted workshops in dozens of school districts, and taught hundreds of teachers in graduate school. Repeatedly the same theme emerged. One of the severe costs of the reform movement has been the isolation of professional staff (Rosenholtz & Kyle 1984). Amidst the public hue and cry for accountability and the unhealthy competition for career ladder stipends, our finest went behind their doors and shut them. Worse, many quit having collegial conversations and get-togethers which can hone craft knowledge. They still cared about students; they still made extra efforts to structure successes, but they did it ALONE.

Prolonged time in such an atmosphere led to passivity. It became easier not to make waves. Thus competent professionals stopped voicing opinions

and asking questions. Some even abdicated their decision-making with regard to instruction. For example I met two first grade teachers with more than 15 years experience, 5 working as a team. Their lesson plans reflected a 75 minute math block. Observation verified that not only was this block continuous but also they were stringing out one objective over that time span. When questioned about this practice, both talked about a district requirement. Their perception was inaccurate and proved to be a fiction which supported their irrational decision. Irrational? Yes! They knew and could articulate that their current practice flew in the face of the developmental needs of 7 year-old learners. Over time and with patient developmental supervision, these two returned to their senses. But they were never incompetents who needed a mandated professional growth plan and daily documentation. Rather they were victims of isolation. But was this experience an isolated event? Scary question!

Come the nineties and suddenly we are not only inviting teachers to the tables of collaboration, we are requiring it. Not only have we mandated participation in decision making, but in typical Texas fashion we took away the planning time it requires. In this atmosphere can we expect enthusiasm for or be surprised by the resounding silence of these meetings? No. Distrust is both predictable and warranted. But with time and training we can enable different responses!

2. *The Need for Time*—Participative decision making is about raising the level of thought. Corporate literature asserts that creative thinking is the primary ingredient of productivity and organizational success which are measured by the bottom line (Carkhuff, 1988). But the business world does not ask its workers to be creative at 4:00 p.m. after eight hours on the line or, worse, on their own time. Indeed all the talk about site-based initiatives is just hot air without internal sanctioned time to engage the mind. Sergiovanni (1990) asserts that empowerment must be enabled by creating opportunities, eliminating barriers, and permitting successes. Such enablement is surely the administrative challenge of the nineties. How do we find and make the time we so desperately need?

One answer is WAIVERS! Our commissioner has been forthright in his commitment to providing time for campuses to engage in staff development. Writing the waiver entails obtaining district support and documenting the professional growth activities. When that is in order the answer from the Commissioner of Education is"YES". So ask! Literally, as I wrote this paragraph the phone rang. The call was from a principal requesting a workshop for a WAIVER day which had just been approved. SO ASK!!

A second answer lies in entrepreneurship. Knocking on doors and asking for support can create those enabling opportunities. One principal I know

freed up teams of teachers with a roving band of substitutes in order to create internal time for planning and thinking. These substitutes were identified by the staff as strong and reliable. In a couple of days this principal was able to meet with the entire school in a format conducive to her objective. She funded this plan by asking both her superintendent and corporate adopter for some support. Then on the way home from work, instead of doing the drive-through window, she went into the cleaners, talked to the manager, and walked away with a check for two substitutes. Entrepreneurship works! If that is not convincing, try this. I met a new principal in an inner city setting who visited a couple of businesses a week, getting to know the community and asking for support. To make a long story short, after two meetings with the local banker, she walked out with a check for $50,000 to fund a reading program and the training for her staff. She found this support simply by knocking on doors! ENTREPRENEURSHIP WORKS!

3. *The Need for Training*—Part of the time needed is for staff development. The Commissioner of Education has stated that the priorities for this development should be a total grasp of the content we teach, a wide variety of teaching strategies, and the knowledge of how to work as a team. The first priority is our strongest suit; the second is far more evident in elementary settings than in secondary; the third is our most immediate need. When people have experienced years of isolation, then whatever team building skills they have learned have been lying dormant for too long. Appropriate training on team building, consensus decision making, and conflict resolution can revitalize those who know and enhance those who are in need. Moreover the training can model effective strategies for use with various groups in the classroom, among the faculty, or within the community. There are abundant resources and offerings to fill this need. Because the need is so immediate, the gratification for participants is intense. So be a local hero and get this on your calendar soon!

Voices From The Field

Steps Toward Success

Recent interviews with administrators from three campuses selected for the Texas Education Agency's Partnership Schools Initiative and one campus participating in Levin's Accelerated Schools Project revealed the following when discussing the effects of site-based decision-making:

1. *Partnership Schools Initiative* (PSI)—The three Partnership Schools contacted have predominantly concentrations of minority and low socioeconomic status students. Their participation in the project extends teacher planning/staff development days from 5 to 15, and they receive

special state and local funding for staff development. Post identification, the schools were asked to submit a 3 year plan for how they intended to improve staff skills and student achievement. There is no prescribed list of hoops to jump for these campuses. Rather they are required to THINK about who they want to be, what success looks like, and how they will attain their goals. Principals from 2 elementaries in urban settings and one from a large high school were asked to describe their programs through the lens of site-based decision- making. Both elementary principals were wildly enthusiastic; both admitted that their enthusiasm could be a turn-off or tune-out for their peers. In describing her huge south Texas campus with over 80 professionals, Principal #1 admitted that as a faculty they were lacking a singular focus which guided a vision for the campus. To that end, the faculty has spent the first year engaged in a glorious smorgasbord of training and visits to include cooperative learning, integrated thematic instruction, literature-based reading, 4-Mat, authentic assessment, team building, and effective teaching strategies. Out of this array, they have made serious efforts to include cooperative learning and 4-Mat strategies wherever appropriate. Grade level teams meet, discuss, review, and reflect on their plans, actions, and results. Because of their enthusiastic response to team meetings, the principal has eliminated old forms of monitoring (e.g. reviewing lesson plans). She proudly asserts:

> They're doing it themselves, and I have not heard one negative remark. In fact they are much more accountable to each other. The good teachers have gotten a lot better, and they are pressuring the weaker links to perform. They are policing their own ranks and don't need pressure from the principal.

She adds that this has led to diminished use of dittoes and workbooks with increased student engagement. Her primary concern is establishing a clearer focus on their vision, paring down what they have learned to what they want to become. Her sole complaint has been the enormous amount of administrative paperwork for all the training. In discussing the specifics of site-based decision-making, she reports that the team planning has made participation and productivity of the five in-house committees no problem. Elected teacher representatives, paraprofessionals, parents, corporate types, and a college professor are on each of the five committees. Knocking on local doors has led to the adoption of the school by eleven area businesses and one university. The local print and broadcast media have showered positive coverage on their efforts.

Elementary principal #2 describes the faculty of her inner city campus as reveling in their sanctioned time to plan, learn, collaborate, review, and evaluate. Before entering the PSI, this campus had already moved to a focus on integrating curricula and accentuating hands-on, developmentally appropriate activities. Since becoming a Partnership School, they have had

training in team building and the implementation of a specific curriculum which provides a more singular focus. Other staff development days have been used for extensive review of what has been done, what comes next, what needs fine-tuning. Thus every team spends concentrated time planning and evaluating each six weeks' efforts. Because they are using a culturally enriched curriculum, they have had to consciously align essential elements and TAAS (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills) and NAPT skills with the content. Again these collaborative efforts have made the standing committees for campus improvement and site-based management a natural extension of their work. The principal has scheduled "Share It" times which, though voluntary, have been SRO each month. She says:

> Because we are a PSI campus, we have a little more freedom. But the big deal is waivers and I have helped my fellow principals apply for them. Any school in the state can do that. Just ask. As long as principals make teachers sign out for paper clips, there will be no site-based management. You have to trust your staff. We all need training, and we all need to understand the shared responsibilities that come with the shared decisions.

The high school principal readily admits that his staff of over 200 is progressing much more slowly. He says they are not used to being given opportunities to make decisions. Rather they wait to be told; they want to follow. He describes initial attempts to pass the torch have been frustrating and resulted in the staff deciding not to decide to avoid the issues. While half of their staff development days have been scheduled to reflect the results of a needs assessment, the other days are open to departmental individualization. Because the departments have yet to achieve effective collaboration in regular meetings, the principal had to coax and prod them to choose what they wanted for a recent internal day. Unprepared, they chose to hitch-hike on the neighboring high school's offerings. So progress is palpably slower in this setting, and perhaps an infusion of small successful steps is warranted. This principal wants much more from his staff and for them.

On the second scheduled training day each department participated in a structured process which allowed brainstorming and discussion of what learning should be and what outcomes every graduate should have. By the end of the day, each department had developed a statement and a plan to implement one small piece of it. A step in the right direction!

2. *Accelerated Schools Project*—This far west Texas school is participating in Levin's project based at Stanford University and coordinated locally by Texas A & M. The campus is three years old, has over 900 students (98% Hispanic and 96% free or reduced lunch) and began a multi-track year-round program in July with broad-based community support. In addition to multi-track and accelerated learning, the faculty also committed to the Southern Association accreditation process, initiating the lengthy

self-study in April with the culminating site visit in late October. Having chaired the visitation, I can confirm that the committee was unanimous in applauding the dedication and extraordinary work ethic of this faculty. They are exhausted and stretched very thin, but they have an infectious optimism; not one faculty member complained about these kids or blamed the poor community or lack of home support. Rather they communicated their zeal and a strong sense of "We can do it; we are headed in the right direction."

The Accelerated Learning Project has a very strong focus on collegial norms and a go-slow approach which crafts the vision while assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the campus (staff, students, and community). The process is steeped in team building with sanctioned internal time. At this campus, the structures for collaboration are in place. Because they have undertaken so much change at once, the current content of the collaborative meetings are dominated by survival issues. The amount of time given to honing their craft and accentuating interdisciplinary efforts is thus outweighed by the pressures of adjusting to four different tracks, individual student needs, and parent conferencing. Some teams are moving at a faster rate, but all of them are immersed in collaboration.

Because the general commitment of the faculty is very strong, their anxiety about TAAS results was high during the site visit. A lot of time and effort had been placed in a schoolwide writing lab. All seventh-graders were taking pre-algebra; all eighth, algebra. Pins and needles abounded. A recent phone call from one of the assistant principals shouted their jubilant news: Reading UP, 4%; Math UP, 22%; Writing UP, 30%! Every educator can share in the celebration of this good news. It will undoubtedly reinforce the collaborative process of this exciting campus.

Conclusions

Let's return to the question asked in the title. Is site-based decision-making HOT AIR or SERIOUS BUSINESS? In a state with over 1000 districts, any mandated program will yield varying results: minimal compliance just to meet the letter of the law; satisficing, or settling for the first fit of action with requirements; mandated look-alike programs for every campus in the district; or concerted efforts to make the mandate make sense for the local context. The first three are inevitably HOT AIR; the latter is SERIOUS BUSINESS. But working in a HOT AIR district does not rule out doing the right thing at the local campus level. We will always have unavoidable political truths, but we can still strive to make our schools whole and healthy places for learners. Many succumbed to the political machinations of the career ladder, and yet others still find ways to discuss

professional growth within the constraints of TTAS. If you work in a HOT AIR district that assigns the site-based committee a next-to-meaningless task, you still have options. One, you could moan and groan and find a way to get it over with in the most expedient way. Or two, you could decide to make it a triumph which just might encourage the powers that be to give just a little more on the next assignment.

In whatever setting, there will be those who are obsessed with the barriers to achievement and those who can see, feel, and anticipate the taste of success. The question is yours. With either option, we are challenged to look inward, to reflect on who we are and what leadership means, and, most importantly, to be honest in response. Good people can work with honest tyrants and still weave magic. True collaboration can yield astounding results. Mixed messages are confounding to all. All of the above is a STRUGGLE! The biggest single issue of quality is learning from each other. Learning together is a struggle. Are you a success-seeker? Or is site-based decision-making just one more thing to complain about?

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3

Site-Based Decisions and At Risk Programs—We Did It Our Way

KAREN BUSER

At Rock Prairie Elementary, we recognize current state mandates as well as district goals calling us to be innovative in meeting the individual needs of students at risk for failure. Utilizing the empowerment we were given through adoption of the shared decision model, we were able to impact curriculum, instruction and services for this special population of our students.

Step One: Establishing Needs

We began by taking a hard look at our curriculum. We believe that the curriculum needs of at risk students are not far different from the needs of all kids: children today need flexible, open-ended curriculum that allows them to build on their strengths and interests. We found ways within lessons and units of material to give children choices, to turn on those kids who might otherwise turn off. We made sure that our thematic units were based on topics of interest to students, not simply topics that teachers wanted to teach. We involved teachers, parents, and children in the redesign of curriculum—all within the realm of site-based decision-making and with full approval of the district central office.

In every instance, we tried to drive curriculum from real-world applica-

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tion. We wanted students (at risk and otherwise) to find school meaningful and relevant. We wanted them to be intrinsically motivated to learn—because the learning directly affected them and their world. We strove to find ways to help children make generalizations from the rooms in the school to the rooms in their homes, from our street to their streets.

Step Two: Curriculum Review with a Focus on Needs of At Risk Students

When looking at the curriculum with our at risk population in mind, we determined to sift through the "fluff" and decide exactly what it was that we wanted these students to learn. With those outcomes determined, we proceeded to "compact" the curriculum, much in the same way Renzulli and others have done for gifted students (Renzulli, Smith & Reis,1982). The difference is that we had an alternative outcome in mind—to demand mastery of only those concepts which reflected our site-designed curricula. All other material was optional. Students were then able to concentrate on the basics, followed by more intense study in their areas of weakness. Often these additional studies were designed around the student's interests and worked positively to keep the student engaged in school. We have the freedom to design our curricula within district parameters—and we make it work for our kids.

Step Three: Training for Decentralization

The district central office plays an important supportive role as we determine our own direction with site-based decision-making. Each year we build further on the philosophy of the administration: to put power for decision making in the hands of those most affected by those decisions. District staff development and training helped us form our site-based council and our design teams to achieve outcomes. Local campus inservice broadened the communication concerning shared decision making, and helped the total faculty and staff to "buy in" to the idea. A core group of parents was included in that first training; each year we strive to broaden the circle of parents who participate in various aspects of decision making on our campus.

Central office administrators realigned their responsibilities. No longer did we have a district-level At Risk Coordinator. Those duties and decisions were left to each campus team, within the realm of the district plan. Designated team members from each campus met and continue to meet together regularly to coordinate plans between school sites, each with the freedom to individualize the plan to meet specific school needs.

Another mark of support from our central office administration came

when they handed us control of our local campus budget and financial accountability. Budget committees and design teams worked together to allocate funds for the implementation of new curricula and programs for at risk kids and all kids. The principal trusted the professionalism of the staff to make quality decisions in using finances effectively, yet efficiently. Cooperative efforts were leveled at parent, business and community groups to work together in a partnership toward meeting school needs.

Step Four: Student Assistance Teams as Local Change Agents

Responsibilities of the local campus were divided among design teams. The Student Assistance Team has had ongoing training in dealing with the problems of our at risk population and proactively looks for ways to challenge children to succeed, rather than to deal with their failures. Site-based decision-making led us to determine the need for intense team training, and to set aside the funds this staff development would require.

Empowerment over local campus budget and staff alignment also allowed the Student Assistance Team to set aside a day for a team retreat. During this time, the team made long-range goals and outlined short-term objectives for accomplishing those goals for at risk children. We made contacts with individuals, businesses, and service agencies in the community to set up a support base of outside resources. Team members were assigned the responsibility of fostering these relationships, to ask not only what each group could do for us, but what we could do for them as well.

The Student Asstistance Team also has a small budget for discretionary use on a day-to-day basis to help meet children's needs instructionally, emotionally, and physically. The team has designed and oversees several innovative, progressive programs to lead our campus toward success for all students. One such program, our Rock Prairie Reading Clinic, was designed to be completely run by trained volunteers. In the reading clinic, much like a sports clinic, children were given basic instruction in the fundamentals of reading in a one-on-one or small group setting.

Under the guidance of the Student Assistance Team, a prereferral process was established to precede any special education referral. The team meets on a regular basis to discuss needs of those children identified as at risk and attempts to determine that all alternatives are exhausted for modification of curricula, remedial and tutorial assistance, and delivery of instruction to give opportunities for success. Within these areas, with site-based decision-making, the Student Assistance Team has the freedom to make recommendations outside the traditional educational concept and to do whatever is necessary to implement these recommendations.

Step Five: Building in Checks and Balances

Site-based decision-making allows total faculty and staff input in the development of our campus plan. Under this umbrella, goals and objectives for the at risk program were integrated into the total campus improvement plan. Key staff members were designated as the "action persons" for initiating innovative projects. The district's mission statement was always before us; everything we did and do falls under the directive of that mission. An interactive relationship and constant communication serve to link district and campus plans. Accountability is essential with site-based decision-making. Our At Risk Program has certain checks and balances built in to protect it from abuse of power. Constant observation is conducted by the Student Assistance Team, with campus administrators acting as team liaisons. Evaluation of all programs, our team decision making, and the school philosophy are completed annually. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses are used to determine the success of our service to our at risk students.

The future holds challenging potential for schools exercising site-based decision-making. The freedom to modify curricula, alter methods of instructional delivery, develop community resources, design budgets around specific campus needs, and build technological support are all pieces of a successful school's puzzle. At Rock Prairie Elementary, the At Risk Program is only one part of our school that has benefitted from participatory leadership. We look forward to exciting times ahead!

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4

Grassroots Perceptions of District Office Roles and School Reform

PHILLIP PAYNE AND
EDWARD PAJAK

Comparatively little is known about the leadership behavior of central office supervisors and how that behavior contributes to school effectiveness and improvement (Wimpelberg, 1988). Those studies of school effectiveness that include the district office in the analysis of factors contributing to school success, however, suggest that central office administrators and supervisors often play a significant part in school improvement efforts (Wimpelberg, 1986; Hallinger and Murphy, 1982; Pajak and Glickman, 1986; Pajak, 1989a). The role of the district office in promoting school effectiveness and facilitating decentralization of decisions has not been adequately researched. Least of all there has been little acknowledgement of the perspectives of those at the grassroots level--teachers, lead teachers, and principals--regarding the contribution of the district office to restructuring.

A small but growing body of literature cautions that decentralization is no panacea and that some degree of coordination is necessary to balance local interests with common goals (Murphy, 1989; David, 1989; Caldwell, 1989). Indeed, total decentralization of public education, like airline deregulation, could very well be catastrophic (Pajak, 1992). However, little

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evidence exists as to the strategic processes from which central office, school, and community participants might plan collaboratively for successful reform. Further inquiry into how district office administrators and supervisors can support and facilitate school-based management and shared decision making is needed (Bacharach et al., 1990; Clear and Schneider, 1990).

Reported here are data from two separate sources. The first source was a national survey that explored principals' perceptions of the types of central office supervisory services needed by schools that are involved in site-based decision-making and how the relationship between schools and district offices changes under conditions of increased school autonomy. The second data source was less traditional--working groups of teachers, lead teachers, and principals who attended a three-day workshop on the role of the central office in restructuring efforts. The two data sources complement each other, in that the information derived from one source is used to interpret information from the other source. In this report the perceptions of principals will be presented first. Suggestions arising from the grassroots will then be outlined. They lead into a tentative conclusion for this paper which requires further consideration.

The Study: Part One

The Coalition of Essential Schools is a nationwide network of more than 100 schools. The Program for School Improvement is a network of just over 20 schools within the state of Georgia. Schools in both networks are implementing a variety of innovations that include some aspects of school-based decision-making.

On the basis of telephone interviews with school principals in 1991, a two-page questionnaire was constructed. A return rate of 51 percent was obtained. The questionnaire asked for information about the school and its restructuring efforts. Included was an open-ended request for descriptive insights into the experience of changing relations between the central office and schools. The questionnaire was mailed to 139 contact persons whose schools are involved with either the Coalition of Essential Schools or the Program for School Improvement.

Table 1 presents information concerning the restructuring efforts in which the responding schools were involved.

Table 1
RESTRUCTURING EFFORT
(n = 71)

Affiliation	**Percent**
Coalition of Essential Schools	70%
Program for School Improvement	30%
Type of Restructuring	**Percent**
School-Based only	1%
Shared Decision-Making	40%
Both	59%
Years Involved	**Percent**
◄2	37%
2-4	32%
►4	31%

Supervisory support for teacher's efforts can be provided from the central office, can be mustered at the school level, or can be shared between the school and central office. The location of responsibility for each of twelve dimensions of supervisory practice (Pajak, 1989b) preferred by the participants in the survey are identified in Table 2.

Table 2
PREFERRED LOCUS OF SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITY
(n = 70)

Dimension of Supervisory Support	**School-Based**	**Central Ofc. Based**	**Shared**
Communication	9%	3%	89%
Staff Development	20%	0%	80%
Instructional Program	34%	0%	65%
Planning & Change	32%	0%	67%
Motivating & Organizing	56%	3%	40%
Observation & Conferencing	75%	0%	25%
Curriculum	26%	4%	69%
Problem Solving & Decision-Making	50%	0%	50%
Service to Teachers	9%	6%	84%
Personal Development	29%	1%	69%
Community Relations	17%	1%	81%
Research & Program Evaluation	7%	10%	82%

The dimensions of supervisory support from the central office that received strongest endorsement from the respondents for improvement through restructuring--staff development, planning and change, and curriculum--can be ascertained from Table 3.

Table 3
MOST IMPORTANT DIMENSIONS OF SUPERVISORY SUPPORT
(n = 70)

Dimension of Supervisory Support	Percent Responding "Most Important"
Communication	2%
Staff Development	27%
Instructional Program	9%
Planning & Change	22%
Motivating & Organizing	4%
Observation & Conferencing	0%
Curriculum	15%
Problem Solving & Decision-Making	9%
Service to Teachers	2%
Personal Development	1%
Community Relations	3%
Research & Program Evaluation	7%

Responses suggested that a need for more staff development rather than less is perceived in schools that are involved in restructuring. Support from the district level for "staff development" included additional funding, additional release time, and additional training, all within a framework of increased autonomy to embark on professional development conducive to the school's own plans for reform. Respondents indicated that staff development should embrace the values of, and be appropriate for, school-based decision-making. Staff development, according to the survey participants, should acknowledge existing capabilities and time constraints of the school staff, be cooperatively planned, and involve teachers through presenting information to their peers and reciprocal visits to other schools. Participants also suggested that the central office should respond to the requests for in-service from schools, rather than imposing a district-wide agenda. Grant writing skill development and exposure to important research pertinent to enhancing the professional role of the teacher were nominated as examples. Significantly, the centrality and vitality of staff development to personal and institutional development in the context of current school reform has been noted elsewhere (Fullan, 1990).

Desired support from the central office in the area of "planning and

change" again reflected a requirement that the district office accept the values and assumptions of restructuring. Shared decision making and decentralization should be part of the district's vision, respondents noted, instead of only an interest of schools. The process of planning and change, as described by the participants, should be driven by teachers, with the central office facilitating, encouraging, supporting, providing input, and serving as a resource. Respondents reported that professional dialogue is needed between the district office and the schools to build trust and mutual confidence and to reach consensus about key issues. Most prominent among these issues are the clarification of roles, the demarcation of responsibilities, and the commitment of resources. Of importance was the view that dialogue, trust, confidence, and consensus-building should be developed prior to decision making situations, rather than during.

Respondents preferred that "curriculum" be developed at the school level, with few district and state requirements. The central office should provide assistance, according to the participants, by introducing new techniques and strategies, organizing curriculum around objectives, conducting research, developing tests, and coordinating evaluation of programs.

The data summarized indicate a strong preference on the part of principals for school autonomy, but not complete independence from the district office. The reason that principals may prefer the school to handle dimensions of supervision like "observation and conferencing" and "motivating and organizing" is that these can be associated with top-down monitoring, bureaucratic regulation, and accountability to external authority. Principals appear more willing to share other dimensions of supervisory support with the central office that are perhaps less easily converted into mechanisms of control, for example, "communication," "staff development," "service to teachers," "community relations," and "research and program evaluation." The final item on the survey asked the participants to describe "the most important thing to understand about the changing relationship between schools and the central office" as schools become involved in "shared decision making" and/or "school-based management." Responses related to shared decision making and school-based management were similar; however, greater concern about democracy was expressed with respect to the former, while greater concern about resources was expressed in the latter. Analysis of the data highlights some interesting patterns. Responses fall into four broad categories which have been characterized as "traditional authority," "empowerment," "devolution," and "democracy".

"Traditional authority" emanating from the district office, for the most

part, was not viewed as inherently dysfunctional. Principals responded that they wanted less bureaucracy and fewer top-down mandates, but reported that support from the school board and district office were essential. The data suggest that principals remain open to advice and guidance from the district office that would "provide moral support," "enable" schools, "allow for risk," and "encourage experimentation without penalty." The respondents suggested further that the central office should be responsive to schools and provide services to facilitate restructuring. Several participants commented that site-based decision-making cannot be "legislated" or enforced through "reform standards." Others observed a need to work within "broad parameters" established at the district level that allow for diversity and accountability among schools, but that the parameters be established collaboratively and communicated clearly.

Responses comprising the category "empowerment" directly address the issue of sharing power within the district. The data relevant to empowerment focused more on the type, distribution, amount, and flexibility of power according to the way in which it could be utilized more effectively in situations of embarking on, or responding to, the needs of reform. Most principals preferred that more power reside at the local school level, but recognized that empowerment was "not carte blanche." Some principals acknowledged a need to "release power" themselves and called for a "multilayered" distribution of power that included the central office, principals, teachers, students, and community members.

The category "devolution" includes data that relate to and describe the process of restructuring. The term "devolution" implies the delegation, transfer, and investment of confidence, responsibilities, and powers to a localized operational and organizational level. Viewed in conjunction with the categories of empowerment and democracy, the term "devolution" arguably provides greater conceptual clarity than does the term "decentralization". Devolution has significant importance to the process by which the central office might conceive of its own responsibilities if empowerment and democracy are to be facilitated and prevail in any strategic plan of school reform, bearing in mind the expectations of authenticity, legitimacy, responsibility, and accountability expressed by principals already engaged in school reform.

Roles of the principal and central office administrators must be clarified and redefined, principals believed, especially in areas where responsibilities overlap. Change must come from "the bottom up," according to a number of the participants, and schools should not be forced into restructuring if their staffs are not "ready" for each "transitionary phase."

Although a decentralized structure may be simpler from an organiza-

tional perspective, it appears to significantly complicate life for individuals within that structure. Site-based decision-making is reported to require more time, more frequent and clearer communication, and greater flexibility on the part of everyone involved. The tensions created by the need to balance mandates, central office roles and responsibilities, financial limitations, and schools with particular reform agendas demands that any devolution leading to genuine reform and autonomy be highly authentic, strategic, collaborative, and informed.

The category "democracy" included responses that called for a change in values and attitudes, such as greater "involvement" and "teamwork" within schools. This category was more clearly recognizable with respect to the issue of shared decision making. "Open communication" and "shared understandings" were viewed as "underlying" a school's capacity for democracy. This category was also linked with comments about the importance of "trust" and "commitment", as well as "responsibility" and "accountability." Democracy, therefore, needs to be understood within the interrelated contexts of empowerment and devolution.

Democracy itself is a multifaceted term with a variety of connotations. The questions of autonomy and democratic participation according to who, how, why, what extent, and which issues, therefore, continues to be a paramount concern to reform.

Suggestions: Part two

Consistent with the development of site-based decision-making, and the importance attached to reconciling the interests of schools and central offices, the conclusion to this paper will take the form of a number of suggestions made at the grassroots level about the preceding themes. The suggestions are genuine. While some might appear to be simplistic, or mundane, they do reflect particular interests among grassroots practitioners. To that extent they need to be discussed and possibly considered further. This type of conclusion is consistent with the premise that there does need to be a resurgence of democratic and moral sensibilities in schools that incorporate the perceived need for empowerment and devolution into a climate of open communication and risk-taking.

This study concludes tentatively with an account of the issues and questions raised by practicing teachers, lead teachers, principals, and supervisors in such a collegial climate. Approximately 80 educators attended a three day educational leadership workshop conducted in Georgia in June, 1992. Of those 80, ten were superintendents. For the final day of the workshop, in the absence of superintendents but based on their involvement in the previous two days, a variety of small working groups formulated the

following suggestions for central office personnel to consider. As already indicated parts one and two of the study should be seen as complementary. These suggestions, however, reveal a potent way of thinking about the anecdotes disclosed in part one of the study.

- To what degree is there a commitment to sharing power and responsibility at all levels?
- What will sharing power and responsibility mean for participation: Who will be involved? To what extent? What sorts of decisions are to be shared? For what reasons?
- Is there a commitment to restructuring the entire school system? If not, what parts and why?
- Does consensus exist about the types of change needed in the system?
- In what ways is a school or system unique? What are its existing strengths?
- How will the political climate and context influence the possibilities and prospects of restructuring?
- Does the physical size of a school or district create opportunities or hamper the possibilities for restructuring?
- How do teachers make effective contributions to the restructuring process?
- What are the perceived obstacles to their effectiveness?
- How can communication be made more open?
- What fiscal resources are available to facilitate restructuring?
- How can trust be established and maintained throughout the restructuring process?
- Do any hidden agendas exist?
- Can agendas be made explicit as a way of building trust?
- How does the unique mission of a school or school system enhance restructuring?
- Which aspects of a school's local community are likely to enhance or detract from efforts at restructuring?
- How and what types of information are to be shared among people in a school or district? Is information clear and easy to interpret?
- How can time for consideration of issues be allowed so that hasty responses to problems can be avoided?
- How can important issues be prioritized?
- How will those who have important contributions to make but who lack experience and confidence be listened to?
- What basis to the limits of power exist, and how might these be communicated and deliberated about?
- What options are available concerning the control of money and

other resources that might be essential in the restructuring process?

- How can staff development contribute to a view of restructuring as a total, ongoing process?

If there is to be a conclusion, it is to take seriously the findings and suggestions outlined above. Whether school reform is mandated and heavily regulated as is the case in Texas, or based on the local initiatives of schools and their membership, there is urgency in the democratic sensibility for a more inclusive and participatory, rather than linear and bureaucratic, approach to enacting reforms. That schools and the central office are often at odds only reflects a breakdown in that democratic sensibility and shared imperative of, and for, education. The perceptions and suggestions outlined here are exploratory, and the conclusions are tentative. As such they should be seen as part of a process that, if taken seriously, helps bridge the divide between teachers, principals, and district office personnel.

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5

Site-Based Decision-Making: Deregulation School Style

JUDY REINHARTZ

According to Herman and Herman (1992), managing schools at the campus level is becoming increasingly common place and is at the forefront of the current national restructuring movement. Several research studies have been conducted to investigate the topic of site-based decision-making. Goldman (1992) cites examples from Kentucky and Montgomery County, Maryland, where the response to site-based decision-making has been less than enthusiastic. Yet, on the surface SBDM appears to have merit and to be what teachers and community members want—involvement in making decisions about issues that affect their schools. Then why have educators been reluctant to implement it in their schools? Why are they skeptical about the change that it requires? What are the conceptual arguments and pitfalls? This chapter will examine several issues associated with site-based decision-making to better understand what it takes to proceed with confidence.

Aronstein and his colleagues (1990) compared the change from a top-down management system to one that is site-based as "...learning to drive on the left side of the road after you've been driving on the right side your whole life: you can't do it without a few false starts" (p. 61). Driving on the left side does indeed require relearning; major changes are essential. The

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idea of making changes, or having to restructure, often evokes strong feelings of confusion, disorientation, and even anger. Taking this analogy one step further, working through the confusion and conflicts is a part of becoming a skillful driver on the left side of the road. Feeling comfortable with SBDM requires a paradigm shift from the way we have done business at the district level to viewing each school as the unit of measure.

Feelings of Exhilaration and Fear: Some Reasons

On the one hand, there are "feelings of exhilaration, but also fear as regulations and mandates give way to deregulation and a 'return of control to local schools' " (Glickman, 1992, p. 24). Glickman asks if practitioners are up to achieving the goals of decentralization. Contributing to the exhilaration as well as the fear are answers to such questions as, "What is SBDM and why is it important?", "What are the benefits?", and "What's in it for me?". Site-based decision-making has received mixed reviews from educators, and often it means different things to different people. Therefore, because of its individual qualities, it is a difficult task defining and explaining site-based decision-making and how it operates.

For Capato (1991), SBDM is ". . . a form of school district organization and management, in which the school site is the key unit for educational improvement" (p. 2). While Davenport, Superintendent of the Allen ISD (Texas), generally agrees with this definition, he adds that SBDM is "... a process of decentralization in which the school becomes the primary unit of management ..." (1991, p. 5). When defining site-based decision-making, the bottom line seems to be that any decisions at a school "... are not the brainchild of an individual or even a small group" (Lane, 1991, p. 121-122); they are the products generated by the entire school campus community.

For self-governance to succeed, faculty, staff, parents and students need to decide what SBDM means to them and their school community. Working toward a vision is the key, and the vision must transcend individuals in the building and overcome such statements as, "This is the way it has always been done" and "If it's not broke, why fix it?". Such a vision will guide decisions regarding learning and teaching goals, staffing, resources, assessment, staff development, and allocations (Glickman, 1992). In addition, a vision provides the big picture of where the school community is moving. For example, the philosophy of the Arlington ISD (Texas) is "if it is not perfect, improve it."

Another reason for feelings of apprehension about implementing SBDM is that there are few discernable patterns or campus models to examine and follow. For example, in a study conducted by Clune and White in 1988 and

reported by Wohlstetter and Buffett (1992), the decision making process varied from school to school and from district to district; the larger districts tended to decentralize the budget, the curriculum and personnel decisions, while the smaller districts dealt with the budget only. In other districts, only the curriculum was decentralized, while others delegated both the budget and the curriculum. Therefore, those who express their reluctance concerning SBDM say that the patterns are difficult to find, and if found, difficult to replicate. This scenario is often the case because decisions are determined by the needs of each individual school campus with its unique community of learners and with a specific vision and mission that guides them.

Leary Elementary School in Warminsster, Pennsylvania, however, is one such successful model of school-based planning. This example of an elementary school's goals include "(1) self-esteem and discipline responsibility; (2) environmental education/community involvement; (3) computer education; and (4) reading/critical thinking skills/study skills" (Solkov-Brecher, 1992, p. 54). The principal credits the building-based program to a shared vision that best met the needs of all their students. In addition, there is a League of Professional Schools which currently has 61 member schools. These schools have successfully implemented exemplary educational practices and are outstanding examples of educational collaboration (Glickman, 1992).

In addition, Ainscow and Hopkins (1992) cite examples of successful schools managed at the campus level. These authors go on to say that these schools set priorities for development which "... are few in number, are central to the mission of the school, ... [and have] specific outcomes for students and staff" (p. 80). Successful schools (or moving schools as they are called) use a strategy which includes three elements—teacher learning, information about conflict resolution, and the empowering of teachers to be leaders. The first element is teacher learning; learning experiences are designed to assist teachers in working collaboratively with colleagues, students, administrators and parents. They also learn about how students learn as well as the nature of teaching. Another element of successful schools is dealing with disagreements. School personnel, students and parents learn to resolve conflicts that may develop during the planning and implementation stages of SBDM. Teachers taking leadership roles is a third element of effective schools. Empowering teachers to be leaders is crucial as the governance system shifts from a top-down model to one that operates from the bottom up. The responsibilities and the leadership roles in SBDM schools need to be clearly delineated. Many times, teachers present a glowing report and oversimplify the teacher empowerment process, making SBDM look so easy. The critics feel that a more realistic portrayal of self-

governance is needed to accurately present both the pros and cons of site-based decision-making. As more schools move to SBDM, more information regarding successful patterns or models will become available.

Beyond definitions of SBDM and the identification of case studies of successful models, there is third reason for resistance which is dealing with the change process in general and the restructuring of individual school campuses, specifically. The key is managing the changes, whatever they are. In 1991, Weiss and her associates found that, after interviewing 180 faculty and staff members at 45 public high schools in fifteen different states, those interviewed said change was difficult. Site-based decision-making does not exhibit itself incrementally; a complete overhaul of the governance structure of the school, in effect a total transformation, is needed. School campuses cannot change just a little or over-night; they have to become something different than they are currently, and this transformation takes time. The mission and the vision of the school need to change to reflect the outcomes planned for tomorrow. Each school becomes a new place, a place where things are done differently and where the teachers and staff are empowered to participate in the decision making process. For Blanchard (1989), managing the change process is "barrel filling" as well as "barrel emptying." Teachers, students, and parents learn to work together, to implement an integrated curriculum and a system of alternative assessment, and to use technology in their classrooms. By learning new strategies and skills, they have to modify and/or give up much of what they have been doing.

A fourth reason why educators are reluctant to implement SBDM in their school and their classrooms is that they are often working off of outdated conceptions of schooling. Schooling for them is a notion in which the curriculum is viewed as static and uniform and being guided by a fixed school schedule and the academic calendar year. It is a view of a school which includes a collection of independent classrooms with 25-30 students and that demonstrates passive teaching and learning strategies (Glickman, 1991). Site-based schools should have a culture which encourages success for all students. They should be places where you look for strengths and build on these strengths (Levin, 1993). Teachers may screen changes regarding SBDM through these outdated views. These views ultimately need to be altered to lift the burdens of the past and allow for change to occur.

Weiss et. al. (1991), after conducting research, uncovered a fifth and final reason for resistance among educators that has to do with power and control. Who makes the decisions? Who is in control? Some of the older, more experienced teachers in Weiss' study resented that younger, less-experienced teachers were involved in implementing the site-based

decision-making system on their campuses. Although the more experienced teachers in theory wanted others to do their part, in practice they objected to having the authority transferred from those in established leadership positions. These same teachers, on the one hand, wanted to be in charge and make the key decisions because that control put them at the locus of power; yet, on the other hand, they wanted to avoid making decisions entirely.

The situation delineated by Weiss and others could be described as a school within a school; teachers who are involved in the shared decision making process and those who are not and yet may want to be. In the end, these two groups of teachers have difficulty interacting with each other, a situtation which can doom SBDM to failure. Lane (1991) reports that team building is essential to the successful implementation of SBDM. He goes on to say that when curricular programs are effective, they are the product of groups of teachers, not just individuals. Another key to effective site-based schools identified by Lane is support provided by the central office.

Summary / Conclusion

This chapter attempted to answer a series of questions regarding why educators are reluctant to implement site-based decision-making in their schools and why they are akeptical about the changes that it requires. In exploring these reasons, the conceptual arguments and pitfalls associated with SBDM become apparent so that school leaders can proceed with confidence. There are moments of exhilaration as well as fear for those involved; these are real situations that need to be addressed as educators consider and move with confidence toward a site-based decision-making system of governance.

Several reasons are cited to explain why educators are reluctant to endorse the site-based decision-making movement. For SBDM to be successful, campus leaders first need to develop a definition using a common language that all educators and community members agree with and understand. Only after coming to a complete understanding of what SBDM is and what the benefits as well as the shortcomings are can those involved be expected to make a decision regarding the implementation of SBDM. Secondly, there is a need to seek out model programs to serve as case studies. There are SBDM schools that can be visited; such schools serve as centers of innovation which can be examined in the "real world" rather than on paper alone.

Dealing with change is the third reason for resisting the implementation of SBDM. The move to SBDM means a total change, a transformation of the school's culture which includes the mission statement along with the vision, the goals, and the objectives of that school. The school culture needs to

reflect what teachers value and reaffirm that they will make a difference. Also a part of site-based schools is teamwork which has become the cornerstone of successful programs. Finally, permanent change requires rethinking about how schools operate and move toward a new view of schooling and of "... professional responsibility by educators at building and district levels" (Ambrosie and Haley, 1991, p. 73). For them, these responsibilities and a common definition guiding the district and individual schools should be incorporated into the principal's job description (Ambrosie and Haley, 1991).

The fourth issue that needs to be addressed is working from outdated models of schooling. Teachers, parents, and administrators have to use different glasses when they view education and its purposes. SBDM is not just another change, but a serious attempt at restructuring elementary and secondary schools. In the final analysis, SBDM provides the mechanism for helping students and teachers be the best they can be and for community members to be proud of their school. SBDM begins and ends with individuals working together, individual teachers, principals, and parents living their school's vision that all students have an intrinsic desire to learn and succeed. Such a view "sees" schooling from a different perspective. Such schools are places where learning becomes a life-long pursuit and where everyone is successful. SBDM recognizes the uniqueness of each school campus; involves teachers, community members and administrators; and builds an educational program that is academically appropriate for all its students.

The final reason presented for resisting SBDM has to do with governance. Who is in control? Tye (1992) says it will take a change in the management behaviors on the part of teachers as well as the principal. A new breed of teachers and principals is needed. The teachers and the principals along with the parents are the main players leading the development, implementation, and evaluation of site-based decision-making. They become partners in making decisions about the instructional and co-curricular programs. All teachers, principals, and members of the community must be invited to participate and become stakeholders in the new system and to take on the role of leaders.

Even though the outward fear and concern centers on lack of information, change, outmoded views, power, authority, and control, in reality the resolution of the controversy centers on teamwork, cooperation, customer needs, success and increased productivity. For decades, teaching has been an individual endeavor. As schools move toward campus-based governance, teaching becomes a cooperative, team effort. This move means that people work together to achieve common outcomes, optimizing human

resources in the solution of problems that exist. Vision and mutuality of purpose establish a common cause.

Site-based decision-making helps campuses become a new breed of schools, one in which the principals facilitate and the teachers and community members make collective decisions that affect their daily lives and those of their students. In addition, there is a shift at the central office from one of monitoring and regulating to servicing faculty and staffs at elementary and secondary schools. Together they embrace the philosophy of SBDM and all that it entails.

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6

Site-Based Decision-Making: The Role of the Central Office Administrators in Decentralization

GLORIA McCOWN

In 1983 the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform.* Many sweeping, centralized reforms followed this report. Due to the lack of success of these reforms, education leaders began to respond with a focus on the school site. Site-based decision-making, the process of decentralization in which the school is the primary unit of management and educational improvement, represented one such response. Educators recognized that the key to educational restructuring and meaningful reform is the degree of autonomy at the individual school.

Decision making at the school site led to new responsibilities and accountability for the principal and staff. The campus planning teams and the roles for the principal, teachers, and parents have been the subjects of much research. Very few studies address the new role for the central office staff. "It not only changes the roles and responsibilities within schools but has implications for how the central office is organized and the size and roles of its staff" (David, 1989, p. 46).

In many instances the central office structure experienced a "down-

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sizing" reorganization, resulting in a reduction in personnel. Central office personnel assumed new roles and increased responsibilities. A clear definition of responsibility presented a critical issue for the staff. One administrator responded, "We are still writing the rules on who is empowered to do something and whose decision it is" (McCown, 1991, p. 25).

A key point made throughout the literature on site-based decision-making is the degree of tension between the central office and the school site. Several factors attribute to the tension. Central office personnel feel a loss of power when decisions move to the school site (Lindelow & Heynderickx, 1989). The change in roles for the central office staff and the relationship with the school principal is another source of strain related to site-based decision-making (Clune & White, 1988). The leadership's concern for standards in districts also creates "... tension between school-level autonomy and system wide uniformity" (Finn, 1988, p. 524).

Critical to the success of any restructuring movement such as the development of a shared governance system is a clear model and vision. Lack of planning and knowledge of structure could be the greatest inhibitor to implementation. Processes must be in place for decisions and for monitoring effectiveness (Sokoloff, 1990).

House Bill 2885, passed by the Texas Legislature in May, 1991, required Texas school districts to develop and submit a plan for site-based decision-making to the Commissioner of Education by September, 1992. Not only did this change have implications for the school site staff, the role of the central office required transformation to fit the new state agenda.

In school districts that have implemented site-based decision-making, teachers and principals are the more frequent subjects of study. Their perceptions of implementation are often surveyed. The roles and responsibilities of the central office staff have not often been the subject of research. The support and expertise of these staff members are critical to the implementation task. Due to this lack of study of central office roles, many school districts do not have a clear picture of the ramifications of the site-based implementation process.

To aid districts in the implementation process, the Texas Education Agency identified model school districts that have developed site-based decision-making procedures and agreed to serve as resources to other districts. The model districts are in various stages of implementation.

A study of 22 of the model districts, conducted in the winter of 1992, provided valuable information on the implementation of site-based decision-making and its impact on the roles of the central office staff. The study surveyed four central office administrators in each of the districts: the superintendent and the three administrators responsible for business, in-

struction, and personnel.

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. As a result of the implementation of site-based decision-making, what were changes in the roles and responsibilities of central office staff?

2. What are the characteristics regarding selection and placement of personnel, budgetary procedures, arrangement of curriculum content and the selection of methods and materials, and professional development?

3. Did the districts have a clearly defined plan in place for the implementation of site-based decision-making?

The districts were in various stages of implementation. Sixty-nine administrators responded to the survey. The survey provided a sampling of administrators from large and small districts and in various stages of implementation. Implementation stages ranged in length from implementation beginning in 1992 to over five years. The majority of the districts had used the site-based philosophy for one to three years. Many administrators indicated that their district was very much in an evolutionary state and that they were implementing change slowly and carefully.

Table 1

Administrators' Response by Size of District Student Enrollment

Student Enrollment	n_a	%
1,000 to 3,000	2	3
3,001 to 5,000	16	23
5,001 to 10,000	10	14
10,001 to 20,000	5	7
20,001to 30,000	17	25
30,001 to 50,000	15	22
50,001 to 100,000	3	6

Note. (a) n = 69 (b) Districts = 22

Changes in Roles and Responsibilities of Central Office Staff

The results of the study were very interesting and in many instances conflicted with the literature. When asked about the number of central office positions resulting from restructuring, the majority of the respondents indicated that there was no change in the number of positions and the number of responsibilities assigned to them had not increased. This status quo did not reflect the down-sizing that is usually associated with restructuring for campus-based decision-making.

Table 2
Frequency and Percentage of Administrators' Responses
by Job Category
I must work to complete all the tasks for which I am responsible.

	Less Time		Neither More nor Less Time		More Time		Total
Job	n	%	n	%	n	%	n_a
Business	0	0	10	63	6	38	16
Instruction	0	0	9	35	17	65	26
Personnel	1	7	10	67	4	27	15
Superintendent	0	0	7	64	4	36	11
Total	1	1	36	53	31	46	69

(a) n reflects 1 no response in Instruction category.
(b) % is the percent of responses received and may equal more or less than 100% due to rounding.
(c) Category contains 5 additional respondents in total survey.

However a third of those responding to the survey indicated that the number of positions at central office had decreased and they had more responsibilities assigned to them. The responsibilities were not moved to the school site as many had perceived. The responsibilities were assumed by those in central office as down-sizing occurred. In many cases the coordination of site-based planning added more tasks and responsibilities to their already full agenda.

An interesting aspect of the site-based decision-making was revealed when administrators were asked about the amount of time for completing tasks. Although the majority indicated that they weren't working any more time to complete tasks, there was a discrepancy among job categories. It appeared that time requirements in site-based decision-making were more favorable to the business and personnel departments (see Table 2.) The instructional administrators were more involved in facilitating the implementation of site-based decision-making. Several stated that they were the coordinators of the process. One administrator admitted that collaborative decision making takes more time. An implication of this response for district planners is that planners must recognize in advance that the central office departments most involved in the implementation must have an adequate number of personnel to support a restructuring of the district. It would appear to be critical for a successful implementation to restructure the central office to redefine job roles and responsibilities before attempting any down-sizing.

Administrators in model districts were very emphatic that their role was a support role. Rather than making decisions personally, administrators in-

dicated that their role was to support the decision making process at the school sites. The administrators also responded that they preferred site-based decision-making.

Personnel, Budgetary Procedures, Staff Development, Curriculum and Instruction

The new role for districts' administrators was reflected in strong support for decision making at the school site. These areas of support included:

- Restructuring budgeting and accounting procedures in the district to provide for fiscal control at the school building level and flexibility in the use of funds.
- Providing more autonomy to the principal and school staff for selection of clerical and professional staff for the schools and to develop, within guidelines, staffing patterns which provided for instructional needs.
- Making provisions for building principals and their staffs to arrange the curriculum content and select materials to meet the needs of their students.
- Moving the decision making to the school sites so that staff development needs may be determined by the building principal in consultation with the school staff.

The evolutionary process of restructuring revealed that not all of the support functions of budget, staff development, and personnel decisions had been fully attained. Some of the administrators attested that these were goals. Districts beginning implementation should recognize restructuring is a slow process and not all goals are achieved immediately.

Staff development was one area that central office shared with campuses. One instructional person stated, "District level training is about 30%; building level training is about 70%. This appears to be workable." Another instructional administrator commented, "There are some district priorities in addition to campus [needs] that require staff development" (McCown, p. 71-72).

Principals and their staffs within the model districts were given a great deal of freedom and flexibility for selection and placement of personnel. The school staff had a predominant role in the selection and implementation of staff development at the school site.

Principals and teachers who are able to select their own instructional techniques tend to have a great deal of ownership in student outcomes. In the model districts, the professionals at the school sites were trusted to make decisions about curriculum and instructional strategies.

Site-Based Plans

Over 60% of the administrators indicated that their districts had a clearly defined plan in place for the implementation of site-based decision-making. Several of the respondents stated that their district plan was "understood," "unwritten," or "in the drafting stage." A superintendent stated, "There are no cookbook recipes that one follows." An administrator in charge of instruction recognized the need for a plan when she commented, ". . . an area we need to work on."

Model districts also recognized the need for an evolutionary implementation process. There were many comments about the transitionary stage of the implementation. Successful change and implementation needs a process or plan in place that is challenging but achievable. The plan also needs the ownership and shared vision of the leaders of the district and the organization.

A key to the administrators' positive reception of the implementation of site-based decision-making lies in the shared vision for change that existed in the districts. This shared vision of the leadership for the future look of the organization is critical to successful implementation of any complex change in an organization (Beckart, 1987).

Recommendations for Implementing Site-Based Decision-Making

This study revealed several key elements to the successful restructuring process. In school districts that have some success in implementing change, the support role of the central office staff is a fundamental part of the process. The central office personnel should become a resource for school personnel to consult on budgeting and fiscal management; curriculum and instructional strategies; and planning, scheduling, and organization of staff development. The expertise of the central office personnel should become their niche in the district.

An additional role recognized by many in central office is that of teacher/coach. As districts work through the evolutionary process of restructuring, central office administration must train principals not only to make decisions on their own, but to become more involved in collaborative decision making required by site-based management.

Successful districts recognize that any complex change requires a shared vision for the future look of the district organization. The impetus for moving the decision making to the school site must have the support of the board, superintendent, and central office staff. To put the vision in place, districts must carefully plan and prepare people for change.

Restructuring is an evolutionary process that takes many years to come to fruition; this concept is important for districts to realize. As the complex

change unfolds, tension often develops between the central office and the school. Collaborative decision making requires not only a growth process but the realization of accountability. District planners should take this balance into account.

Site-based decision-making can be a very successful philosophy for restructuring for improved student achievement. The improvement of student achievement should be the bottom line for the evaluation of site-based decision-making. The success of implementation will hinge on district leadership's putting a long range vision and plan in place to keep the district on a continuous path through the restructuring journey.

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7

Superintendents and Site-Based Decision-Making: The Test of Practical Leadership

MIKE BOONE

One of the characteristics of the reform movements that have engaged public education in the last few years has been a discounting of the role and potential contributions to reform of the superintendent of schools. Indeed, this neglect prompted Murphy (1991) to refer to the superintendent as the "Maytag Man" of school reform: a superfluous appendage to the finely crafted and efficient machinery of change which seemed to operate quite well without him. But experience and a growing body of research indicate that ignoring the superintendent's role in bringing about reform is neither warranted nor justified by reality.

There are several reasons for the lack of attention paid the superintendent. The superintendency has rarely been a target of attention for either researchers or reformers. Hord (1990, pg. vii) refers to the "surprisingly modest amount of attention" given to the role and work of the superintendent in the research. While recent research efforts have begun to correct that defect (Whisler, 1987; Hord, 1990) and a small body of work is beginning to emerge about the craft and practice of the superintendency, the volume of research is thin when compared to the existing literature on principals and teachers.

The focus of reform efforts has also contributed to the neglect of the

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superintendency. The so-called "first-wave" of reform was directed at the policy-making levels of state government—governors, legislators, and state education agencies. The "second wave" has been focused exclusively on the school site, emphasizing the roles of principals, teachers, and parents. Second wave reforms such as site-based decision-making, teacher empowerment and parental involvement largely ignore or downgrade the possibility of positive contributions by district level leadership.

More to the point, reformers and practitioners are frequently critical of the bureaucratic nature of school district management. Many in the educational community consider superintendents and central office administrators to be impediments to school improvement and turn to reform as a way of neutralizing or eliminating the supposedly malevolent power of central administration. Superintendents are expected to remain passively on the sidelines, surrendering authority and responsibility while others assume the direction of educational change. Such a position flies not only in the face of the political reality of most school districts, but also ignores a significant body of research about the superintendent's role in instructionally effective school districts (Murphy, Hallinger & Peterson, 1985; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986; Jacobson, 1987; Brown & Hunter, 1986).

In point of fact, there is no single key actor in the process of school reform. Everyone—parents, teachers, principals, central office administrators, superintendents, and board members—must be involved if reform is to work. Ignoring the superintendent as an important contributor to the success of school reform is to endanger the ultimate success of those efforts. As Murphy (1991, pg. 32) so succinctly points out " ....widespread improvements in schools are unlikely to be realized unless superintendents are more substantially involved in the reform agenda." And that involvement must go beyond a mere gatekeeping function or the abdication of authority to principals and teachers. Successful reform requires the *active and personal engagement* of the superintendent of schools.

Superintendents and Site-Based Decision-Making

Cuban (1985) describes three leadership roles that the superintendent is called upon to play simultaneously. These three roles are *politician, manager,* and *teacher.* As a politician, the superintendent works actively with the board and with community groups. This behavior is accurately described as "forming coalitions" both external and internal to the school organization which support the school and its programs. The superintendent acts as a manager when s/he performs those functions necessary to maintain the organizational stability of the school, e. g. planning, monitoring, evaluating and, allocating resources. Finally, the superintendent is a

teacher who instructs board members on the routines of their position. In fact, the teaching role must begin with the board, since no school improvement effort can be undertaken without the board's approval and support. The teaching role is also displayed when the superintendent takes an active part in curriculum and instructional matters and in the assessment of school effectiveness. Behaviors such as being visible in schools and classrooms, protecting the integrity of the instructional day, and encouraging professional development are part of the superintendent's teaching role. Cuban summarizes the three leadership roles this way:

> If managing a school district is akin to fire prevention and if a superintendent's political skills keep the blazes that inevitably erupt under control, then the superintendent-as-teacher serves as the fire starter, because his or her goal is to alter the thinking and actions of board members, school personnel, and the community at large....(pg. 30)

It is in the role of teacher that the superintendent makes the most significant contributions to the development of site-based decision-making.

Leading site-based decision-making. The superintendent demonstrates leadership in the creation of site-based decision-making in a number of ways. Specifically, s/he:

- creates an environment within the school district that fosters and rewards change;
- encourages divergent thinking in approaches to problem solving;
- alters the risk-taking propensities of subordinates; and
- supports and guides principals in implementing site-based decision-making.

These tasks are the exclusive province of the superintendent. Central office administrators can and do play a role in implementing each of them, but the initiative must come from the superintendent. No one else in the school district has the visibility, the authority, or the political base from which to act.

Climate engineering. The superintendent-as-teacher's most important contribution to the success of site-based decision-making is the creation of a climate for change. This climate begins with the process of vision sharing. Vision sharing is a function of the superintendent's ability to communicate a coherent pattern of beliefs about good educational practice to all members of the school community. As Cuban (1984) says " . . .no superintendent can secretly improve a school" (pg. 147). The superintendent must talk about the vision with all stakeholders and invite them to share in its realization. But beyond communicating a vision, the superintendent must make others aware of how the vision might be achieved through specific alterations of institutional processes, e. g. decision making arrangements, new instructional strategies, creative staffing patterns, etc. Effective vision sharing re-

quires that the superintendent communicate not only what the vision is, but also how the vision can be realized.

Divergent thinking and risk-taking. Another critical contribution of the superintendent-as-teacher is the ability to be a what Konnert and Augenstein (1990) call a *"divergent thinker"* and *"an assessor and alterer of risk-taking propensities."* As a divergent thinker, the superintendent encourages principals and teachers to find new solutions to old problems. Searching for the "one right way" to do something or excuses such as "we have always done it this way" are no longer permitted. Instead, creativity and innovation are rewarded. As an assessor and alterer of risk-taking propensities, the superintendent supports principals and teachers who take risks in the search for more effective instructional arrangements. Change cannot occur without the willingness to take risks and the security to make mistakes. In effect, the superintendent must communicate to everyone within the district that change is valued and that s/he will stick by those who attempt it. Not all change efforts will be successful nor will they show immediate results. But principals and teachers who want to make changes must know that they have the security to learn from their mistakes and to try again. Only the superintendent can provide this kind of security.

Supporting and guiding principals. Except in very small school districts, the superintendent has few opportunities to directly affect what goes on in the individual classroom. But the superintendent can have a direct impact on the development of site-based decision-making through the manner in which s/he interacts with building principals. Superintendents contribute to the success of site-based decision-making by treating principals as colleagues and by providing the necessary support and guidance to them as they work to implement the change in their schools. The support and guidance of principals can take a number of forms. To begin with, the superintendent can enhance his/her accessibility to principals by removing any existing layers of central office personnel which hamper direct communication with building administrators. Open access fosters better communication with principals, provides opportunities for the superintendent to demonstrate support of the principal, and can lead to more freedom, authority and accountability for principals (McCurdy, 1983). The superintendent also impacts the direction of change by his/her frequent and visible presence in school buildings, offering advice and counsel to principals, modeling appropriate leadership behavior, checking perceptions, and monitoring progress toward site-based decision-making. A collaborative working relationship between the superintendent and principal is critical to the successful implementation of site-based decision-making.

Allocating sufficient resources and time for professional development

and modeling appropriate behaviors are other ways in which the superintendent-as-teacher can support principals as they implement site-based decision-making. Effective superintendents not only provide training and development opportunities to principals, they participate in training alongside of principals, demonstrating their own commitment to change. The superintendent-as-teacher also models participative decision making as s/he works with groups of principals throughout the year. If principals are expected to involve teachers and parents in decision making at the school site, then they themselves must be participants in group decision making at the district level. Modeling of desired behavior is one of the superintendent's most powerful teaching tools.

Finally, the superintendent supports and guides principals in implementing site-based decision-making through the annual goal setting and evaluation process. Goals leading to the implementation of site-based decision-making should be mutually agreed upon by the principal and superintendent. During the school year, the superintendent monitors progress toward goal attainment, offering encouragement and/or critical comment when needed. Thus, individual performance goals shape a framework for the superintendent as s/he checks and reviews principal performance, communicates with principals about site-based decision-making, and models appropriate leadership behaviors. Incorporating progress toward site-based decision-making as both formative and summative elements of the annual performance review cycle provides a measurement of success for the committed principal and an incentive for the more reluctant building administrator. It also clearly demonstrates the superintendent's own commitment to site-based decision-making in a forceful and not to be misunderstood manner.

Conclusion

The implementation of site-based decision-making in a school district will require the contribution of everyone concerned. The superintendent contributes by creating an atmosphere within the school district which encourages and rewards change, by encouraging creativity and risk taking on the part of teachers and principals and by providing active support and guidance to principals as they work to establish site-based decision-making in their schools. The superintendent must take the lead in implementing site-based decision-making. Anything else would be to fail the test of practical leadership.

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8

Site-Based Decision-Making and Strategic Planning: Friends or Foes?

JAMES R. LeBUFFE

Introduction

District-wide strategic planning, which involves a lot of work, is a valuable tool that can help school districts achieve worthwhile goals. Done well, strategic planning focuses an organization on achieving major goals and sets time lines for achieving results. Strategic planning goals, if produced with wide buy-in by teachers, administrators, the community, school board members, assume a stature and strength that can provide impetus for positive change. Districts should plan; they should plan for both short-term and long-term strategic planning. But even having said the above, district-wide strategic planning, if done too hastily or without proper buy-in, can create some problems as it solves others.

Scenario

A progressive district committed to long-term planning forms a "strategic planning" group of 20-30 administrators, teachers, parents, community members, and board members. A highly-respected, articulate expert on strategic planning is flown into the district to conduct a weekend

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strategic planning retreat at a conference center. The group examines data, looks at past district goals, studies recent achievement test results, and, by working 16 hours a day for three days, develops a strategic plan with fourteen major district goals. Some of these goals may be outside of accepted practice in the district. Sometimes, several persistent, argumentative, and energetic disciples can move an idea forward during the weekend retreat and get it accepted.

The group returns to the district, and the assistant superintendent reworks the plan into a professional-looking, 82-page document. The Board of Education next spends a Saturday morning with the superintendent and assistant superintendent, becoming familiar with the plan. Three weeks later, the plan is discussed and draft copies of it are handed out at a board meeting. Committees are formed to delve into each major goal and to develop action plans. These committees meet for several months and develop 20-page plans of their own for each major goal in the strategic plan. Then, several months after the weekend retreat, the district-wide strategic plan is adopted by the Board of Education.

Meanwhile, each campus in the district has developed its own campus plan, detailing major goals at its school for student achievement, school climate, parent involvement, facility use, and staff development. Teachers on the campus, with a few active and involved parents, have hammered out their campus goals while working closely with their instructional leader, the principal. When teachers around the district learn that the strategic planning group has mandated that the district shall adopt _____ (fill in the blank here for your district—perhaps "computer-assisted instruction", "whole language", or "outcome-based education" will fit), some amount of cynicism, distrust, and noncompliance may result.

Two processes, two sets of goals, two sets of action plans that may not match. If we examine the development of the traditional strategic plan vis-a-vis how campus plans are usually written, it is clear why the potential for conflict exists.

Strategic planning is often top-down and done quickly, involving few people, at least at the early stages. Campus plan development is often bottom-up, may take months to develop, and often involves many staff members. Let's look at the following chart to see an outline of how these two approaches often differ.

STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT
Top-down
Often, few people involved
District-wide

Often with outside consultant
Light teacher involvement
Often done quickly

CAMPUS PLAN DEVELOPMENT
Bottom-up
Often, many staff involved
Campus-wide
Done by campus staff
Heavy teacher involvement
Usually takes considerable time to develop

Recommendations

Long-term, district-level strategic planning and site-based decision-making need not be processes in conflict. Indeed, it is critical to the effectiveness of both campus and district that these processes run on parallel tracks, directed to the same destination in the land of improved student achievement. For this to happen, the following is suggested:

1. SCRAP THE "MAD WEEKEND." Twenty to thirty people, working under pressure to produce an important product, may produce a product that is off-base and hard to change. Don't try!

2. GET REAL INPUT. As the draft plan is written, take it to principals and have principals take it back to campus planning committees or to campus steering committees. Also, present the plan to the District Educational Improvement Council and to board members for reactions, deletions, and additions.

3. DON'T WRITE BY LARGE COMMITTEE. Have a small group of between three to six people actually write the strategic plan. The superintendent should be in this group.

4. INCLUDE TIME FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT. One-shot overviews of new or recycled educational practices don't prepare or sell teachers on a new technique, philosophy, or method. Plan time for training. Think in months or years, not in terms of one-shot training events.

5. ONLY MANDATE METHODS THAT MOST TEACHERS CAN USE SUCCESSFULLY. Don't mandate any method unless it can be uniformly taught successfully by your staff. If only half of your district's teachers, even after staff development, want or can use cooperative learning or outcome-based education effectively, don't mandate such methods as strategic goals for all schools. If, however, with proper and on-going training, 95% of your elementary science teachers embrace math manipulatives or selected, hands-on science units that are integrated with the current cur-

riculum, go for it. These are strategic planning goals that may bear fruit and that will foster harmony instead of discord.

6. HELP CAMPUSES DEFINE WHAT TO ACHIEVE, NOT HOW TO ACHIEVE IT. A district that has reached consensus concerning overall district goals should not dictate to campuses how to reach those goals. If a campus is receiving positive educational results, let it continue on course, following its campus plan. However, if sub-par results are consistently coming from a campus, it is time to reexamine not only the campus plan goals but also the means that the campus is taking to meet those goals.

If these recommendations are followed, campus-level decision making and district-level, long-term strategic planning can support and complement each other.

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9

Curriculum Integrity In An Environment of Decentralized Decision-Making

CLAUDE H. CUNNINGHAM

Each school district in the State of Texas was required by Texas House Bill 2885 to develop a plan for the orderly implementation of site-based decision-making on the campuses of the district. By September 1, 1992, over one thousand such plans had been submitted to the Commissioner of Education for review and approval. The plans were designed around six components as required by the commissioner. These six components are:

1. Commitment to improved outcomes for all students,
2. Collaborative structure and process,
3. Statement of purpose,
4. Site-based decision parameters,
5. Adequate time, on-going human resource development and technical support, and
6. Procedures for planning and evaluating the decision-making process.

Please notice that none of these components addresses *directly* the curriculum. The curriculum, as operationally defined for this paper, is the

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framework of the educational process, i.e. those objectives, strategies, activities and resources available to the classroom teacher designed to assist students to reach established outcome goals. Components 1, 2 and 6 hint at issues related to the curriculum. Yet, maintaining the integrity of the curriculum, especially in an environment dominated by decentralized decision making, should be a matter of extreme concern.

Maintaining curriculum integrity is not a simple matter in such an environment. Operationally defined, curriculum integrity is maintained when there is an identifiable completeness to the framework of the educational program made available to students throughout a school district. This definition should not be construed to imply rigidity. Curriculum integrity is best maintained by implementing a curriculum as an atlas of ways to reach defined educational destinations. It should provide for multiple evidences of goal attainment and provide a wide range of objectives, strategies, activities and resources to support the teacher as s/he plans instruction to meet students' needs.

The very essence of site-based decision-making is to move the locus of each decision to the organizational level closest to that accountable for the decision. At the most general level, the board of trustees is accountable for the establishment of district-level curriculum goals. The most specific level is represented by the individual classroom teacher as s/he makes curricular decisions related to the instruction of an individual student. Every organizational level of a school district is involved at some point in the process of curriculum decision making; the board of trustees at the point of goal setting, the central office in establishing a curriculum plan for the district, the campus site-based decision-making committee in setting campus priorities, and the classroom teacher in planning a specific lesson.

The level of outside scrutiny of the curriculum decision making process becomes lower as the process moves from general to specific. Goal setting is accomplished by a very public process controlled by and the products are approved by the board of trustees. But, the myriad curriculum decisions made each day by each classroom teacher often are seen only by that teacher and his/her students. The integrity of the curriculum must be maintained, not by supervision, but through compatibility among the student needs recognized and the curriculum goals set by each of the entities involved in the curriculum decision making process both within and beyond the individual school district. Curriculum integrity is absolutely necessary, for without it there can be no guarantee of educational equity either within or among school districts. From special interest group to state education agency to local school board to classroom teacher, each influences the other and ultimately that final classroom decision of what will be taught to whom.

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, a set of nine factors which influence the curriculum decision making process will be explored. These influencing factors will be placed into a simple model to help the reader visualize their levels of influence on the final classroom decision of what will be taught to whom. Next, the interplay of the nine influencing factors with each other and the final curriculum decision made in the classroom and the resulting possible impact on educational equity will be explored. The idea that these nine factors can and do provide mutual checks and balances on each other and what is actually included in student instruction will be proposed.

Influences on Curriculum Decision Making

The curriculum decision making process may be visualized as a series of concentric circles with the center-most circle representing decisions made by an individual teacher regarding what will be taught an individual student in a specific lesson. Each wider circle represents factors which influence that final decision and, in turn, the sources of influence which sway those factors. The closer the influencing factor is to instructional decisions made in the classroom, the stronger its influence on those decisions. Diagram 1 illustrates these levels of influence which impact classroom decisions.

DIAGRAM 1

INFLUENCES ON CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING

While not attempting to be totally comprehensive, the diagram clearly illustrates that decisions about student instruction are impacted strongly by influences both inside and outside the classroom.

The most influential factor in determining the instruction to be delivered a student is the teacher him/herself. It is the teacher who makes the final decisions related to the objectives and activities which will be used in the instruction of his/her students. These decisions probably are best left to the teacher. The teacher may make the choice of objectives and activities based on any number of personal and/or student variables, but the choices will be made. If the integrity of the curriculum is to be maintained, there are several significant factors which must have impact on the teacher's decisions.

The first two of these factors are the district's curriculum and the student needs identified by the campus site-based decision-making committee. These two factors provide the teacher with the guidance needed to insure that his/her lessons are providing students an equitable instructional program. The teacher may choose to go far beyond these two factors in curriculum decision making so long as these are included in his/her curriculum decision making.

These first two factors, district curriculum and campus identified student needs, are derived from other sources which are important to the curriculum decision making process. The first source of influence on both of these factors is the district's adopted goals and priorities. These goals and priorities provide direction to all the efforts of the district and provide a valuable background against which all district, campus and teacher activities may be compared. The end results of a broad-based planning process, the district's goals and priorities reflect the expectations of a variety of audiences for the school district and its students.

The second factor which influences both the district and the campus is the state-adopted essential curriculum elements. These essential elements define the minimum acceptable curriculum standards of the state. The essential elements provide the district, campus, and teacher with an outline of what each required and elective subject should include. They are the curriculum benchmarks in the state accreditation process. In addition to their use in the accreditation process, the essential elements are frequently used as the base source for the objectives and activities included in the district curriculum.

State essential curriculum elements and school district goals and priorities are strongly influenced by a set of four additional factors. These four factors, all of which are groups of people, include:

1. Parents and community,

2. Professional associations,
3. Teachers and practitioners, and
4. Special interest groups.

Parents and community have their most direct influence on the school district goals and priorities. They are significant contributors to the planning process through which the goals and priorities are developed. They are members of, and their input is actively sought by, site-based decision-making committees. Parents and community members have strong, vested interests in the outcomes of the school district and, therefore, are primary sources of direct influence on the district's curriculum decision making processes.

Special interest groups have their most direct influence at the state level. They are most obvious in the textbook selection process, but also are very active in efforts to influence the content of state essential curriculum elements. Such groups seldom attempt to influence the content of local school district curriculum. They concentrate their efforts on the very large school districts, if they make local efforts at all. Any special interest group influence at the campus and classroom level is limited to the impact they are able to have at the state level.

The other two groups have similar levels of influence on both state essential elements and district goals and priorities. Professional associations and teacher/practitioners are involved directly in the process of developing both state essential elements and district goals and priorities. Their input is valued in both efforts. Teacher/practitioners are included at most levels of the curriculum decision making process. As a group, they are the individuals most involved in the final decisions regarding what will be taught to whom. This one fact makes the input of teacher/practitioners a necessary consideration in most levels of the curriculum decision making process.

Professional associations also are involved at several levels of curriculum decision making. They bring a national perspective to the development of state essential elements. Professional associations develop national standards for both curriculum and professional practice. They are often at the forefront of professional innovation. At the school district level, professional associations represent both their national and local membership, as well their association curriculum perspective.

Maintaining Curriculum Integrity

Each of the nine factors cited above influence student instruction to some degree. Those factors closest to the final curriculum decision have the strongest impact on what is finally taught and hopefully learned. Traditionally, it has been the district curriculum which has been the guarantee of

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educational equity within a school district. In an environment of decentralized curriculum decision making, there is no single check or balance which can guarantee this equity. If there are inconsistencies among these nine factors, there is little hope of equity either within or among school districts. Recognizing that these factors exist and that they influence curriculum decision making is the first step toward maintaining the integrity of the curriculum and, thus, educational equity.

A logical second step in the process of preserving educational equity is the realization that these same nine factors can be checks and balances in maintaining the integrity of the curriculum. Each of the nine factors cited earlier represents a possible accountability point in the curriculum decision making process. Beginning with the outside circles, those factors which have the lowest direct influence on the instruction delivered to a student, we find four groups of people which are intensely interested in the products of the educational system. Each of these four audiences has expectations for the outcomes of the process of curriculum decision making. They expect to see certain characteristics in students as they graduate from high school. None of the four groups of people--special interest groups, parents and community members, professional associations and teacher/practitioners--are hesitant to call the state or school districts to task when they feel that their expectations are not being met. The influence of this level on an individual classroom teacher is much lower than the strength of its demand for accountability on the whole of the educational system.

The next level of factors exerts considerably more influence on classroom decisions regarding what is taught to whom. State essential curriculum elements and school district goals and priorities are primary resources to the planning process at both the district and the campus level. These two sources provide significant direction to the development of curriculum at the district level and to the identification of student needs at the campus level. State testing programs, which are based on the state essential curriculum elements, have tremendous impact on the design of district curriculum. Performance on such tests is often the only evidence required by campus planning committees to establish student needs. District goals and priorities, developed in response to the expectations of parents, community, teachers, and professional groups, are the other primary source of direct influence on the curriculum of the district. The outcome focus of the district is defined in these goals and priorities. Student performance which does not meet the district goals and priorities is immediately identified as an area of need. The interplay of these two factors provides a balance between the requirements of the state and the goals of the district.

When a teacher steps into the classroom, s/he is armed with two critical sets of curricular tools: the curriculum of the district and the student needs targeted by the campus. These two sets of information provide the teacher the criteria required to assess his/her instructional planning. The district curriculum includes objectives, strategies, activities, and resources necessary to support the district outcome goals and priorities. These components are designed to respond to the requirements of the state. As the teacher selects objectives and activities from the district curriculum which meet the campus identified needs of his/her students, the teacher imposes his/her values and professional judgment on the process of curriculum decision making.

The judgment of the teacher is a valuable check on all the other sources of influence on the final decision of what will be taught to whom. If the curriculum does not provide appropriate objectives, strategies, activities and resources for the teacher's class, the curriculum is flawed. If the student needs identified by the campus are not the needs of the teacher's students, the campus committee needs to review its plans. Conversely, if the teacher's judgment leaves students' needs unmet, the campus identified needs and district curriculum provide a check to which the teacher's decisions may be compared.

Viewed in this manner, curriculum decision making is a process which is checked and balanced both internally and externally. The compatibility of the various factors which influence curriculum decision making is crucial. The key to maintaining compatibility among the factors is to actively seek input from each arena and to integrate that input into the curriculum. So long as the various factors which influence the process are compatible, the integrity of the curriculum can be maintained. The equity of the education provided to children is assured when the integrity of the curriculum is maintained. There can be no guarantee of educational equity in an environment of decentralized decision making absent curriculum integrity.

10

A Culture For the Development of Accomplished Rule-Breakers

W. L. SANDERS

Sam Walton, after amassing a fortune by doing what other merchandisers advocated couldn't be done remarked, "I have always prided myself on breaking everyone else's rules, and I have always favored the mavericks who challenged my rules ..., and, in the end, I listened to them a lot more closely than I did the pack who always agreed with everything I said." (Walton, 1992). Walton's philosophy is in agreement with views about change expressed by Frances Hesselbein, former chief executive officer of the Girl Scouts of the USA. Hesselbein (1992) advocates that paradigm breakers constantly set new standards for quality and value which force other competitors to adapt or fail. A similar theory can be found in the leadership of Texas public school reform. Texas Education Agency Commissioner Skip Meno, when questioned in the spring of 1992 in Waco about what principals could do to assist him in his job of transforming public education in Texas, replied, "Challenge the system—challenge the system every time you have an opportunity."

As the Copperas Cove High School (CCHS) principal (in 1993 CCHS was named a United States Department of Education Drug Free School and a "Mentor School" for high school restructuring in Texas by the Texas Education Agency), I find nurturing and encouraging associates to challenge the existing education system most necessary. For a culture to

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support paradigm breaking, the following tenets are necessary:

(1) **Establish a central purpose**. A telling sign of a transformed school is that all efforts stem from a stated mission or purpose, for shared values are a prerequisite of transformation. People can be motivated to do uncommon feats by being asked to do rewarding things, not things they are rewarded for. At CCHS, we are committed to focusing our efforts and doing nothing in a perfunctory sense. Our goal is to do less better. Both our efforts and what we do will have significant impact on the learner.

(2) **Allow all within the community to become partners (stake-holders)**. Let others invent the rules. If they invent the rules (write the constitution and other procedures), the stake-holders hold the power: the power to make effective decisions and to have ownership of the same decisions. We must constantly reach out to all within the community, for it takes a whole community to rear a child. During this school year, a constitution forming Partners-In-Education was developed that binds together the educational staff, student body, and patrons. The constitution formalizes our covenant to work together for an educated populace in Copperas Cove.

(3) **Believe knowledge is the most democratic source of power and precedes innovation**. Preference given to the person with the best idea rather than the person with the most senior title, etc. is democracy personified. A school that draws on the talents and abilities of all the community stake-holders--regardless of position, ethnicity, or gender--is poised for greatness. Standing task forces led by educators who are not administrators or department chairs and comprised of educational staff, students, and patrons work together to discover or develop new solutions to the problems we must negotiate to successfully educate the students of our community.

(4) **Understanding conflict is essential for growth**. Conflict among the community stake-holders does not result in winners or losers because the concept of sides has been eliminated. When peers view themselves as partners, and possess conflict resolution skills, meaningful teamwork can result through "creative dissonance." In an effort to develop a cogitative rich culture, conflict resolution skills are taught to teachers and students. Also, the difference between dialogue and discourse is emphasized to all task force members.

(5) **Reduce or eliminate internal bureaucracies**. Create a boundaryless organization. Utilize cross-functional task forces in lieu of or with traditional department organizations in leading school improvement efforts. At CCHS, task forces empower and enable our school to collaboratively investigate areas of concern and implement appropriate innovations. Task forces are active in the areas of mastery learning, planning,

socialization, austerity, shared leadership, higher-order thinking skills, cooperative learning, learning styles, technology, assessment, management, thematic units, self-esteem, and communication across the curriculum.

(6) **Question every function of your school.** Make experimenting the norm. Expect regular, small, periodic improvements in all areas. Practice organized abandonment, the systemic elimination of procedures or functions which are yielding less than quality results. Schools can become sites of managed evolution (Drucker, 1992). All educational and business functions on our campus are annually reviewed and subject to immediate change. For instance, we are in the process of changing from didactic- to interactive-driven instruction. We also are adapting results-based curricula.

(7) **Strive to raise everyone's standard of performance.** Bet that the contagious effects of team spirit will improve the quality of instruction and increase pride in all school functions. The leadership of the campus (principals and department chairs) is studying the nature of the work performed by educators, the culture which is created by the attitudes we have about the work, and how best to positively effect learning outcomes.

(8) **Reward innovation.** Mentor unselfishly. Encourage the entrepreneurs to disrupt, question, and upset standard procedures. Collaborate. Cultivate relationships. Lavish trust on your associates, for trust is the link between concepts of the mind and the actual manifestation of ideas (Garfield, 1992). Model absolute discontent with the status quo, which will subsequently encourage the stake-holders to become risk-takers. At CCHS, all involved in school improvement are encouraged to "become risk-takers for kids," for in many cases, the status quo is the antithesis of quality. We strive to have many educational experiments operating at all times.

(9) **As writer Susan Sontag posits, "All understanding begins with our not accepting the world as it appears." Paradoxes must be accepted and understood (Kay, 1991).** Paradoxes such as "less is more", "success requires failures", "internal order during external chaos", "winning by losing", "increasing power by giving power away", "fake it until you make it", and "the positive Pygmalion effect" are necessary parts of any contemporary education plan. As confusing as same may seem, less is really more: more in-depth understanding and a greater likelihood of demonstrating competence in the classroom.

(10) **Realize that every employee must feel comfortable while integrating his/her work with family life.** Family interests must be paramount. The leaders of the campus must show empathy, concern, and support for all families. Remember, if you want staff members to care about the community's young people, care about their young people; bend the rules to favor all young people. We encourage the staff initially to take care

of their families' needs and to edify others who are doing the same. We are flexible concerning our staff's needs to participate in their children's school activities.

(11) Be conscious of ethics. Ethics form the glue which holds world-class organizations together. Treat others with the respect and dignity they deserve and expect. The leaders must live comfortably within the group's moral code. Rank must have few privileges. Our campus leadership is expected to model ethical behavior and espouse the necessity for everyone to act in a respectful manner toward others.

Molly Ivins, noted columnist, recently wrote in the *Ft. Worth Star Telegram*, "The people in our history that I admire most are the hell-raisers and rabble rousers, the apple-cart upsetters, and plain old mumpish eccentrics who just didn't want to be like everyone else. These are the people who made and make the constitution of the United States a living document" (1992). If Ivins' opinion is applicable, education today desperately needs educators to question the rules of the system. As previously pointed out, few systems have ever been changed by people who are comfortable within those systems. Without meaningful, deep change initiated by change agents and risk-takers, educational change will be left to powerful citizens such as Ross Perot, educational profiteers like Chris Whittle, or educational reformers with political agendas like Chester Finn, John Chubb, Terry Moe, or David Kearns. Myself, I much prefer change initiated by hell-raisers and rabble-rousers, apple-cart upsetters, and mumpish eccentrics.

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